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# Philosophical Foundations of Faith



Philosophical Foundations  
of Faith · A CONTRIBUTION  
TOWARD A PHILOSOPHY OF  
RELIGION · By Marion John Bradshaw

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*The power and the wisdom which discloses to our eyes the beauty of the supreme intelligence, so far as that is in our capacity, can never be better revealed than by the knowledge of the wonders which are his work. . . . For how can one love God and glorify him without knowing beauty?—Leibniz*

*For what is war, but that same time in which the will of contending by force is fully declared, either by words or deeds? . . .*

*Wherefore to seek peace, where there is any hopes of obtaining it, and where there is none, to enquire out for auxiliaries of war, is the dictate of right reason, that is, the law of nature.—Hobbes.*

*The greatest minds, capable as they are of the highest excellencies, are open likewise to the greatest aberrations; and those who travel very slowly may yet make far greater progress. . . . It is almost the same thing to converse with men of other ages as it is to travel.—Descartes*





## Preface

THIS BOOK has grown out of the Hazen Lectures which I was privileged to give at the Middlebury Convocation of Congregational Ministers, for which I was assigned the topic, "What It Means to Be a Christian." Realizing that successive lectures tend to become repetitious when a fixed topic is presented year after year to much the same group, I felt it desirable to seek some unusual approach. It seemed advisable, also, to adopt some method of treating the topic which would as much as possible escape the tyranny of contemporary trends.

It finally occurred to me to take my assigned question to the chief founders of modern philosophy. Historical data seemed likely to offer firmer foundations for thinking than that given by shifting current fashions. The eminent positions these men had held in the world of thought seemed to warrant an effort to ascertain how they regarded religion. Another obvious value of such treatment was that those who heard or read the lectures would more assuredly be challenged, through their contact with thinkers of established reputation, by at least some intellectual work of proven worth.

The lectures have been adapted to the needs of readers by including some other topics and by adding chapters on Descartes and Leibniz. The result is a volume concerning the attitudes of the founders of modern philosophy toward Christianity. I hope that these studies of some of philosophy's greatest figures will have interest and value for students of the history

of philosophy. Such students will soon find that I have championed some unpopular views. But whether my dissenting interpretations are substantiated or not, I am certain that the important historical questions raised do deserve careful reconsideration.

Although this book deals with the founders of modern philosophy, it is intended, not primarily for students of philosophy, but for students of religion—which, of course, need not exclude philosophers. Each of the following chapters wrestles with important questions which still confront people who think seriously about religion. And although it may at first appear that this volume merely adds another to the already long list of books about modern philosophy, the thoughtful reader will soon discover that it treats problems which are central in the current discussion of religion. So much is this the case that it may at times be difficult to realize that we are dealing with thinkers of the seventeenth century.

Needless to say, these chapters do not form a comprehensive and systematic treatment of the subject which gives the book its title. But the present volume is published with the conviction that it makes some contribution to the discussion of the theme—both in what is borrowed from the founders of modern philosophy and in what the author adds. If critical readers find the title over-pretentious, I venture to think that the eminent thinkers of the seventeenth century may safely be taken as typical of philosophers of other periods and that the main thesis of the book does not misrepresent the attitude of philosophers toward religion.

Since much of the material used is not readily available and some is not to be had in English, I have embodied in the text many quotations from the authors studied—some of considerable

length. I trust that the book will thus to some extent serve as a source-book for the philosophy of religion.

I am happy to acknowledge indebtedness to friends and colleagues who have helped me improve the manuscript. Dr. Sterling P. Lamprecht has given numerous valuable suggestions, and several alterations in the chapter on Spinoza have been made in attempting to meet his acute criticisms. Dr. Merwin M. Deems has made helpful suggestions for inclusion in my description of the seventeenth century. Dr. Ronald B. Levinson has been particularly helpful; not only has he detected errors in fact and in grammar but also has compelled me to reconsider some doubtful assertions and to restate several personal judgments. My daughter Jane has furnished the translation of several extended passages from one of the letters of Descartes. My expressed thanks to those who have been named must not be converted into a suggestion of their responsibility for faults and errors which still remain.

The author acknowledges with thanks the courtesy of the following publishers who have granted permission for the use of quotations from their copyright books: University of Chicago Press, College Entrance Book Company, The Macmillan Company, Oxford University Press, Fleming H. Revell Company, Reynal and Hitchcock, Inc., Charles Scribner's Sons, Sheed and Ward, Inc., and George Allen & Unwin, Ltd. This expression of indebtedness is detailed in the Notes which, for the convenience of the ordinary reader of the text, have been removed from the footnote position and collected at the back of the book. In the case of some foreign publishers, the author is compelled to take such permission for granted, since transatlantic airmail letters sent many weeks ago are still unanswered. This unusual form of indebtedness is gratefully acknowledged to

Constable and Company, London; J. C. Hinrichs, Leipzig; Libraire Philosophique, J. Vrin, Paris; and F. Alcan, Paris. The courtesy long accorded scholars in such matters is, I trust, to continue as one important tie which binds us together in a world of high-minded men, even if the black night of war makes the quest of truth more arduous.

Finally, I shall be happy if the abundant evidence herein presented enables some of my readers to rebut the current opinion—a libel on philosophy and an unjustified belittling of religion—that philosophers are not interested in Christianity or in Christ.

MARION J. BRADSHAW.

*Bangor, Maine*  
*Feb. 12, 1941*

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## I. The Eternal Needs the Historic

*And I profess still, that whatsoever the Church of England . . . shall forbid me to say in matter of faith, I shall abstain from saying it, excepting this point, that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, died for my sins.—Hobbes*

IT WAS NO linguistic accident that the great apostle of Christianity linked "philosophy" and "vain deceit." Philosophy has long been notorious for arousing expectations it fails to satisfy and even for breaking its solemn promises. Since the days of the Apostle Paul many other preachers have regarded philosophy as a deceitful and insidious foe of faith and have warned common people that they are always in danger of being led astray when they turn to a philosopher for an understanding of what it means to be a Christian.

It is possible to develop, with some degree of plausibility, the theory that all religion is superstition, especially if one defines both terms loosely enough. It is true that religious persons have often been easy victims of credulity and that they have frequently failed to see the direct and indirect values of methodic doubt. But there is little present danger that educated people will ignore the scholars who point out the over-beliefs which characterize religion. The greater danger today is rather that the intellectual classes will become so keenly conscious of humanity's past failures that the fear of being "duped again" will quench the spirit which affirms that man is to have



dominion. There is danger that knowledge of previous mistakes will weaken our wills and frustrate efforts to formulate extended and worthy purposes. In the intellectual mood still widely prevalent in the United States, we find it convenient and sophisticated to excuse ourselves from the one imperative effort by asking, incredulously, "How can a man be born again?"

Candid facing of the facts of religious experience compels us to admit that dangerous errors may be promoted by religion. But when we sense the spiritual flabbiness which follows the loss of a willingness to dare; when we behold the shallowness of a babbling humanity which has tamely restricted its interests to areas of supposed certainty; then we realize that there is at least one great tragedy of life which a worthy religion avoids. For complete and accurate knowledge of all our past stupidities is quite inadequate recompense for the impoverishment resulting when men no longer walk by faith.

Men proud of their worldly wisdom, even some calling themselves philosophers, have often failed to see this ample justification of religion. That is the reason why in a famous early era "Not many wise, not many mighty, not many noble were called." It was not among the elite, but among the common people that the new Christian religion developed.<sup>1</sup> The upper classes accepted some of the competing philosophies as substitutes for religion. But the people of street and market had been almost immune to the ideologies of the schools, and they thus had no philosophy to stand between them and the new gospels which promised salvation. To such people Paul did not come with excellency of speech or of wisdom. He appears to have tried that on Mars Hill, in Athens, where the devotees of current philosophic trends mistook him for another philosopher come from the East. Out of that experience, not especially suc-

cessful, came new insights into the difference between philosophy and religion and a clearly formulated purpose to trust no more to the wisdom of men, but only to the power of God. So philosophy was linked with vain deceit, and Christians were warned against both. Paul's authority has induced many Christians of later times to repeat his expressed distrust of philosophy. Too often the philosophers have retaliated by identifying religion with superstition and have sought by increasing knowledge to banish them both.

The current distrust of philosophy is not dependent, however, on Paul's authority. It is more from their own experience and observation that many capable and informed people are openly suspicious of any philosopher's support of religion. Typical of many such contemporary judgments was a Vermont newspaper editorial which greeted the official announcement of my Hazen lectures, to which reference has already been made. After giving the details of the proposed course, the editorial added,

There are a good many laymen who think there is too much philosophy, psychology, and theology from the pulpit now, and that what the average man would like to hear is more of what it means to be a Christian according to Jesus the great teacher; Paul, the great missionary; St. John, the great preacher; and Moody, the great organizer. The ideas of four philosophers translated into what it means to be a Christian by a professor of religious philosophy might be a bit confusing, but the simple though great truths . . . would be understood. And sympathetic discussion of such matters would soothe and rest, not disturb and confuse an already involved and perplexed mankind.

The painful fact is that philosophers have too frequently been guilty of a particular and gross disservice to their fellowmen. In winning an escape from the thralldom of false beliefs,

they have found it necessary to examine belief itself and to investigate as far as possible the grounds of all beliefs. Sometimes their work has resulted in turning men's beliefs into mere theories, and the effect has often been disastrous. For however necessary it may at times become to restrain our common human credulity, it is highly undesirable that confident belief should everywhere be replaced by cautious theory. Remaking our theories does not necessarily unmake our lives, but just that dire result may result from a philosophy which undermines and weakens belief as such. It is in the end no real service to men to paralyze their wills in situations which demand confident action, co-operative endeavor, unswerving purposes, and dependable commitments on which others may rely.

The Vermont editor quoted above may be taken as spokesman for a more rational distrust of the philosophical treatment of religion. He was certainly right in maintaining that it is neither sound thinking nor common sense to turn a religion into a philosophy. But it is equally certain that there is no *greater wisdom in transforming philosophy into religion*, however great may seem the temporary success of the idolized political leaders who are now repeating that ancient folly; nor can our minds be satisfied with any attempt, such as many of our contemporaries are again making, to establish religion and philosophy in wholly separate fields.

It is clear that religion furnishes experience and insight of which a truly respectable philosophy must take account. But however much philosophy needs the religious motivation, by which it has been so profoundly influenced, men will not be best served, as we shall see in the chapters to follow, by transforming religion into philosophy. Any philosophy merely dictated by religion will be regarded with suspicion or hatred by

free minds and from the standpoint of reason may seem anemic. Attempts to reverse this process enormously exaggerate the role of reason in the life of man. Repeated attempts to turn philosophies into religions and to establish so-called scientific religions serve chiefly to show that such deliberately founded religions are feeble substitutes for the historic faiths through which the purpose of God is so evident and his power so felt, that men seem reborn, their nations remade, and the world itself made new. The best philosophical substitutes for the genuine religions can hardly hope to gain enough popular acceptance to make them dominant factors in human affairs. Both religion and philosophy are justified and enduring interests of man, and even a sharp tension between them is far preferable to an arrangement which deprives either of its rights.

## I. MARKS OF AUTHENTIC CHRISTIANITY

Today problems in public life seem crucial for religion, and many of our thoughtful contemporaries demand that a gospel be social. But the approved treatment of social problems necessitates attitudes other than those which are most characteristic of religion. Such problems require not so much a constant search for central facts as extended co-operative action based on inconclusive evidence and on tentative judgments. They are approached, not through demonstrations and revelation, but by some workable measure of social agreement and a conviction that our human powers suffice to ascertain enough of right to permit the setting of a worthy course for a man or for a nation. But these attitudes and ideas are so alien to many religious leaders that they think the talk about "social salvation" a contradiction in terms.

There are many different reasons why religions lose prestige

and power. A religion may wither because people become convinced that the prophets do not believe their own revelations or the priests trust their ceremonies. The characteristic thought trend of a religion may block the road toward new goals. Supposed heralds of eternal truth may become the gullible victims of pernicious propaganda and the ignorant peddlers of manufactured lies. Men highly commissioned to foster love and brotherhood may take up the spreading of spiritual poisons—may practice the unprincipled use of verbal ammunition or may turn their pulpits into sounding boards of hate. Overzealous ecclesiastics may reduce the meaning of God to that of a power monopolized by their church or may develop a theology in which the Lord God is merely the personification of a sectarian group.

Some religions regarded as firmly founded on unshakable foundations have collapsed when their ethics fell too far below the level of decent manhood. It is quite clear, for example, that the waning power of the Delphic Oracle, long the most potent religious instrument of the Graeco-Roman world, was not due to growing scepticism about the divine inspiration of the raving priestess; what brought the collapse of authority and power was the persistent suspicion that the priest-interpreters were commonly bribed to pervert the god-sent oracles. There are many other reasons why movements proclaimed eternal have proved ephemeral.

In trying to describe Christianity we should avoid stressing merely local and transient emphases, which easily degenerate into fanaticism when knowledge is slight and zeal intense. But it is dangerous to ignore one trend in current thought which tends to bring about in this country a sharp clash between church and state, such as endangers the very existence of the

religious institutions in Europe. This mode of religious thought asserts that God reveals himself only through religion; that the state is necessarily secular and selfish. Such thinking almost rivals political totalitarianism in fomenting social disaster. Even though it masquerades as Christian, this way of thinking is alien to the inner thought of both the great religions for which the Bible is a sacred book. It ignores the dominating biblical conception of God as a divine purpose, actively shaping history toward moral ends and using even imperfect instruments, nations as well as persons, to do his will. Identifying God with an abstract principle of right, it practically detaches theistic faith from man's actual problems, for humanity's ethical choices are commonly between sides and between parties distinguished by various tones and shades of moral gray.

Pathetic volumes could be filled with one-sided views of the nature of Christianity. Such estimates imply that Christian belief is a shifting flux, dependent for actual content upon thought patterns which vary with social weather. Religion may even exceed all other great human interests in this tendency to take a part for the whole, and from this frailty some contemporary theologians are not exempt.

The fact is that several persistent characteristics distinguish an authentic Christianity. Appreciating the lasting value of one such mark, some religious leaders are now urging that preachers should ignore the war and leave the problems of society, industry, and government to men expert in those realms; that preaching should concern itself solely with those unsearchable riches which are inwardly discerned and which governments can neither give nor take away.

No competent student would deny the continuing importance of the inward phase of religion or question that it makes

genuine individual and social values available to men. But any effort to confine religious thought and purpose to the cultivation of inward mystical experiences has this almost insuperable drawback—that it surrenders that conception of the relation of religion to culture which most distinguishes Judaism and Christianity from other world religions. To accept this proposal would make us imitators of techniques in which the other religions are perhaps the world's admitted masters.

Whenever it is proposed that we abandon all effort to establish God's Kingdom on earth and that we substitute mystical enjoyment of an other-worldly bliss, someone should thunder the objection that there are mountain-top monasteries of world-fleeing oriental religions where they have us beaten a thousand years in the employment of this technique. Of course there is an element of wisdom in renunciation of desire for things of life and earth; but that is not the main distinguishing mark of biblical religions. Where that motive is completely dominant we have an oriental pessimism alien to our genius and hostile to our wisest views of life.

In addition to stimulating an inwardly realized sense of personal redemption, Christianity is marked both by a sense of the cosmic and a sense of the historic. Through Christianity human life attains to something deeper than the space and time dimensions of life. Without cutting our ties to earthly institutions, it makes us willing citizens of a Kingdom not of this world. It seems to relate us to an abiding source of creative energy and persuades us that, having endured a thousand wars, our religion could again survive the collapse of human culture.

But however strong our conviction that Christianity is a word of God for this world, however firm our faith in a secure

cosmic anchoring in something prior to time, we also need some roots in social life. We need to be definitely related to an historic movement. Wisdom does not exalt a timeless reality by belittling history. Indeed, a religion must be judged by its fruits even more than by its roots. It must be judged not only by the ideals its followers discern and by their efforts to attain them but also by results successfully achieved. In other words, in order to be both rational and moral, a faith must show its works. A gospel must commend itself by an honorable career of actual accomplishments open to human evaluation; otherwise the good news of a gospel is no more compelling than a philosopher's good wishes and the so-called "truths" of a revealed religion are no more adequate than a moralist's good advice.

## 2. THE HISTORIC AND THE ETERNAL

The constant emphases of authentic Christianity have contributed to the generation of diverse theologies. But unexpected results may flow from competing theological views. For example, one of my friends has given his life to history. He has spent many years with documentary materials which seem to him a precious record of the thought and life of a gifted people through a long span of time. He does not talk much of the Eternal, and his friends might suspect him of being unacquainted with any Absolute. But each time our paths cross, I find him still working on, with or without the crowd's acclaim, toward seemingly unchanging goals.

Another friend seems always to pose as priest or prophet of the Absolute. For him nothing is ever good unless it is perfect. He accepts no motive without exaggeration. He thinks only



eternal values are valuable. Always stressing the supernatural and the "wholly other," this friend sails each year toward a different goal. Feeling himself attached only to the Eternal, he swings in an eccentric orbit, as if deflected from a calculable course by the temporary spell of any attracting body he happens to be near. Despising dependence on careful thought as "mere reason," he zooms from absolute certainty to eternal truth, to spiritual infallibility, to the "transcendant other," magnifying every momentary goal and blissfully unaware that he is riding a theological whirligig.

Why does the historic rather than "the eternal" so often furnish the most dependable data for charting a straight life course? Why do those who talk so devotedly of "the changeless" race through so many altered view-points in one decade? Why can a humanitarian philosopher, renouncing the quest of certainty and relying on a man's share of creative intelligence, chart so much steadier a course of life and thought than the theologians who insist that God has spoken and that they know what he has said?

As we shall see in Chapter II, the foremost founder of modern philosophy advanced it as an infallible rule that what God has revealed is incomparably more certain than anything else. He maintained that the truth of ideas and doctrines revealed by God ought to be accepted with a higher sense of certainty than reason can give. The conspicuous absence of this certainty in contemporary theology would have seemed to him convincing testimony that these changeling theologians do not really believe in the revelations of their religion, however emphatic be their verbal claims. When given searching realistic examination, the present cult of the eternal appears to be mostly an instrument for intensifying prevailing winds of doctrine, for height-

ening the current tensions, for strengthening the natural swing toward life's extremes.

In the light of such facts historical study may be worth more than speculation for acquainting us with the philosophical foundations of religion. From history may come likewise the support of ordered general convictions and the means for a proper discounting of modes of thought which mark an ephemeral Christianity—or what its facile expounders would laud as a "theology for these times." We may learn from history how to guard against the world-wide thought trend which makes this the totalitarian age; for the political dictators who have undertaken to overthrow democracy express a mood found in many phases of present life—a mood which revels in oversimplification and rebels at sustained thinking and careful words.

For in this totalitarian age many feel that all the world must match their mood. When one of our eminent theologians goes to the right, theologically, he tells us that liberalism is dead. Another contemporary thinker goes to the left, economically, and he claims that capitalism is dead. Still another goes down, morally, and he assures us God is dead. Such undue magnifying of private views is the mark of the totalitarian age. Attuned to the times, a theological student finds it necessary to believe, in order to serve the Church at all, that the Church practically controls God.

But if we seek the aid of history against totalitarian trends, we must also be on guard against an idolatrous historicism. Magnifying private opinions into fanaticisms can never make us wise or suitably frame our views of religion. But in escaping the thralldom of momentary trends we must not perpetually look back to an unreal golden age. We must not falsely idealize

Christian history as an irresistible onward sweep of truth. We need a vigorous imaginative sense of the possible worth of alternative courses of history, for to equate the Church with the Kingdom of God is to blunt our spiritual sense and to identify history with the right is an ignoble confusion of man's moral judgment.

### 3. COMMERCE WITH GREAT MINDS

For many years my summers were largely given to travel in foreign countries, with its deepening of insights, its widening of horizons, and its development of appreciation of the worth of alien ways. Recently I have traveled in another direction. After spending a year with the living wise men of the East, I turned anew to the great men of the past. I obtained passports and visas into one of history's great epochs, and reveled in the close companionship of men who laid the foundations of modern philosophy. I sought out an exciting era, when men's thoughts were stirred both by a new sense of possible power over nature and by the wastage resulting from the wars of religion which had devastated Europe.

The interest of this spiritual travel is not in gaining a more accurate knowledge of those great philosophical systems which were forged by these men in the heat of past conflicts of mind. That may result, indeed, from careful reading of the materials presented for intellectual consideration. But the resulting book is not a philosophical holiday or a series of short raids into the domain of thought. The men whose works I have studied realized that willful blindness cannot make men wise. Christianity was a dominant factor in the environment of each of them, and to ignore it would have been to alienate their thought from reality.

To look at Christianity through the minds of men who made a former century great is much like interviewing great men of other lands and of other faiths. All rewarding travel has its own laws, and they are among the laws which must ever guide the earnest quest of truth. Eyes and minds must be honestly open to facts, and we must be freed as far as possible from inherited assumptions of the necessary rightness of our own thought and practice. We must sincerely desire every aid toward better understanding. The time-born sense of our superior wisdom must be laid away. We must be willing to forget prevailing prejudices and to substitute a receptivity to fresh impressions. And there must be an end to cheap reliance on customary labels.

Given an actual sensitivity to historic reality, we shall have a flood of new light thrown on abiding problems. We discover the changing form of enduring questions; that men of old did solid work on such problems; that our present compromises are but other answers in a series of solutions. We are forced to talk less about the thinker's "cold reason." We may find the hired soldier a reflective genius. We may discover in the materialist a readiness to die for Christ. When facts are seen afresh, when teachings are not deduced from labels or conclusions proved by wishes, then we may recognize a lone lens grinder as supreme master of morals and discover that nobles were once democracy's truest prophets. We find that genius comes "in the line of Melchizadek," with lineage untraceable and in ever-changing patterns. We find that the mystic is not necessarily obscure, illogical, speaking the language of impetuous passion. We find, rather, that the great mystic rivaled the great rationalist in mastery of scientific technique, that the supreme master of abstract metaphysics lived aglow with tender solicitude and passionate love, and that the great empiricist

believed dogmatically in common men. We may be forced to hail one of the hated "unbelievers" as the most real Christian of his age. Intimate acquaintance with another century may allow us to escape some of the blind spots common today. And although we begin our study without revisionist prepossessions, it will cause the author no regret if it makes some great philosophers seem more religious than students of the history of philosophy have commonly supposed them to be.

Although attention is steadily focused on the views of Christianity held by the founders of modern philosophy, this book should not be taken as an ordinary volume of Christian apologetics. Of course the facts presented and the conclusions reached have a legitimate apologetic use, and turning them to that purpose will not displease the author. Indeed, it seems to me that the professional religious thinker generally suffers from an initial handicap today because of the large proportion of our contemporaries who charge or suspect that religious leaders are hired men. Under such conditions a service of peculiar value may be rendered by a book which deals fairly with the religious ideas of thinkers who, however famous they are as philosophers, may not unfairly be regarded as amateurs in theology and laymen in religion.

Other philosophers might well have been included among the founders of modern philosophy, and possible titles have come to mind for chapters on Bacon, Malebranche, Berkeley, Hume, and Kant. Inclusion of these men would have made too big a book and would have extended the time span unduly. More important, in order to minimize the time element in accounting for differences of philosophy, it seemed to me wise to confine the study to the thinkers of one creative period.

It is true that the six men selected were not exact contem-

poraries in the usual sense. Although born eight years later than Hobbes, Descartes is really the elder of the group with regard to thinking; and all the others were profoundly influenced by some aspects of his thought. In a sense, therefore, two intellectual generations were chronological contemporaries. It lies beyond our purpose to attempt a treatment of the intricate and reflex relationships between a thinker and his age, but it was probably no historical accident that the age of these great philosophical systematizers was a time of great confusion and of bitter conflict. It was the period of regicide, commonwealth, and restoration—the time of the greatest turmoil in England's history. And to understand the subsequent chapters better, we may find it profitable to glance briefly at some of the characteristics of that seventeenth century in Western Europe.

#### 4. THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

Back of the rise of modern philosophy lay centuries in which scholasticism dominated the intellectual outlook of Europe so as to constitute what has been called "the ecclesiastical age of mankind." Scholasticism still lingered in colleges and universities, provoking vigorous dislike in Thomas Hobbes at Oxford, encouraging men to blind their eyes, as John Locke put it, and making Descartes distrust learning. The situation confronted all our thinkers with some common problems. The reign of Aristotle was being challenged in many quarters, but philosophy was still in bondage to theology. "The church determined what was believed; Scholasticism was to explain why it was true." <sup>2</sup> It was still customary to hold, in too narrow a sense, that to believe was the way to become intelligent, and even to believe impossibilities in behalf of faith was still thought meritorious.

In general the century was lacking in historical perspective,

and it did not draw now-obvious distinctions between the Christian religion and the Church's power. The greatest Christian king "would never miss a sermon or a fast-day, but no one could make him understand what was meant by humility or repentance." <sup>3</sup> In spite of the work of the Reformation, religion still continued to be in large part a faith in the divine and infallible authority of the Church, belief in what it taught, and obedience to its commands or in making use of its facilities for the disobedient. Radical incongruities in thought and practice easily went unnoticed if not accompanied by heresy or schism. Sins were easily forgiven even the unrepentant, and lesser Christians than Louis XIV appreciated being able to sin without loss of standing in the church.

The spirit of Machiavelli made itself secure in Church headquarters, and to many it seemed incarnate especially in the Society of Jesus. Jesuits gave their order what many people thought was an unscrupulous devotion; and they won for it a practical omnipotence by their skill in showing men how they could remain sinful and yet be loyal to the Church. Under such auspices artistic trivialities reigned in the churches of Italy, and picturesque sensationalism dominated France, where conditions were typified by pretty Louise, "flying from the arms of Louis XIV to scrub floors in a Carmelite convent." <sup>4</sup> In reaction against such conditions the powerful Jansenist movement was born.

During that century the life of Western Europe was profoundly disturbed by political upheavals, religious persecutions, and civil wars. These disorders caused the migration of many people and the temporary exile of vaster numbers. Many supporters of the Church thought that Christianity could be saved only by restoring to the Church greater authority than the

princes of the world could muster. Others proposed to bind the conscience of men to obey the king alone.

Religious unity was still commonly thought necessary for national unity. Many influences were at work, however, to promote toleration and religious liberty, and it will be a grateful task to record the great work of philosophers toward that end. But influences of quite another kind promoted religious liberty. First, many of the religious wars proved indecisive, and men became convinced that the religious question could not be permanently settled by force. The terrific price paid for the religious unity which France did attain made many people regard it as a great calamity; and the remarkable prosperity which followed religious peace in Holland promoted the Dutch ideal in other lands. While factors other than religion helped to cause the bitter warfare of the century, were even at times the dominant factors, so many of the wars were made to turn on religious issues that men began to suspect that a revealed religion was a social misfortune.

The world-wide commercial enterprise of Dutch traders gave their country wealth and power and made available to its people commodities brought from the East and the West. The level of living rose in Holland; and the comforts of life there, with political and religious liberty guaranteed by law, attracted men from many places, especially men in disfavor with the rulers of their own lands. And while Descartes seems to have found in Holland less liberty and tolerance than he, a Roman Catholic, had once enjoyed in France,<sup>5</sup> he and many others found there that privacy which is often as important as liberty in fostering the great works of the mind. The people of the merchant nation were in fact, as Descartes described them, so taken up with their own business and so accustomed to aliens that a foreigner



could spend almost his whole life in Holland without ever being noticed.<sup>6</sup>

Under such conditions Holland became a veritable forcing bed for free thought. There Spinoza worked out the principles of a rational biblical criticism; there Locke shaped his *Letter on Toleration*; Hobbes was immensely stimulated by contacts in Holland; and it was there that Descartes did most of his epoch-making writing and that Leibniz gained some of his leading ideas. Of the great thinkers we shall consider, only Pascal had no direct connection with the lowland country. If Paris was the center of culture, Holland was the home of free minds.

Other powerful influences on the thought and life of the century remain for briefer mention. The scepticism of Montaigne, covered by polite conformity, found ardent practitioners in France and in other lands; and there had come into being numerous undercover centers of definite disbelief. Many of the leaders of that century, especially in France, found their chief inspiration in Stoicism, and ecclesiastics joined their foes in reading Epictetus. Descartes said that "in philosophy, where it is believed that all is doubtful, few sincerely give themselves to the search for truth, and by far the greater number seek the reputation of bold thinkers by audaciously impugning such truths as are of the greatest moment." The result of these conditions was that thoughtful people interested in religion felt an imperative need of a new Christian apologetic.

Factors of another kind helped to shape the mind of the century. Events in the outer world were assuming a new relevance for thought, and new discoveries in science caught the attention of men. National rivalries in exploration were followed by an age of colonizing, supported by national ambitions, by the quest for profits, and by mingled religious and political

motives. This expansion brought new racial contacts for the peoples of Europe, deepening their own racial awareness and promoting the rising nationalisms.

The balance of power in the homeland societies was shifted in this period. The great expansion of profitable trade led to the enhancement of the power of business men and the formation of a capitalistic system. Consequently the power of the landed gentry declined. The commercial expansion, with its need of objects for barter, had direct results in individual and social habits. It made possible higher standards of comfort and demanded new efficiency. New classes sought new guarantees of liberty as they became important. And the frequent interruptions of trade resulting from wars called for new consideration of belligerent and neutral rights and led to definite beginnings of international law.

These revolutionary forces were greatly aided by inventions. Three great inventions played their part in the remaking of the world. The invention of printing, vastly lessening the labor of producing books, promoted the diffusion of learning, bringing to a more extensive public the humanistic heritage rediscovered in the Renaissance. The Scriptures, translated into all the common languages, steadily promoted liberty and sometimes encouraged license. The invention of the compass aided adventurous sailors, but perhaps the invention of the telescope was of such great help to the scientists that thinkers surpassed seamen in the discovery of new worlds.

These new forces and discoveries and inventions brought a new epoch in the history of humanity. The thoughts of men were stirred as never before in the intellectual history of Christendom. The clash between rival infallibilities weakened faith in all infallibles. The break-up of old worlds, the widening

horizons in every phase of life, the loosening of clerical prestige in things of the mind, a Scripture-bred independence of the common man—these movements and events marked the century in which modern philosophy began. They gave a unique spiritual complexion to that era in which our studies lie.

## II. Descartes: the Great Dualist

*Let, then, your thought pass for a little while beyond this world, that you may behold another wholly new one which I shall cause to rise to view in imaginary spaces.—Descartes*

ONE MIGHT CALL Descartes "the Great Sceptic." But experts would insist that he was not a sceptic; that he did not reject religious beliefs; that among the greatest modern thinkers this label is best reserved for David Hume. Others would assert that he was not a sceptic in the technical sense of the word—that is, he did not deny the competence of reason to know reality, that in this sense the term is best reserved for Kant. Descartes is associated, however, with the advocacy of doubt, with the conviction that beliefs are never safely grounded until they have been sincerely doubted. If a sceptic is one who systematically persists in doubting to the utmost limit, then this thinker is a fountain head of scepticism, even though his doubting has sometimes seemed a mere theatrical pose.

When one takes the term "sceptic" to mean, however, that doubt and suspended judgment must be the final stage in our quest for truth, then instead of being a sceptic, Descartes is the sceptic's greatest foe. His most eager and persistent search was for certainty, and history tells of no one more convinced of having found it. Let him describe himself on this point. "Not that in this I imitated the sceptics who doubt only that they may doubt, and seek nothing beyond uncertainty itself; for, on

the contrary, my design was singly to find ground of assurance, and cast aside loose earth and sand, that I might reach the rock or the clay." <sup>1</sup>

One might restrict the term "idealist" and give that label to Descartes. He first set out sharply the irreducible distinction between mind and matter, between thinking and extended substance, so uniquely and clearly establishing the logical priority of mind over matter that all systems of modern idealism have roots in his thought.

The *cogito* of Descartes displaced, so to speak, the axis of philosophy. To the ancients and the scholastics the thinking mind appeared inseparable from the universe, regarded as the object of its thought. According to Descartes . . . the existence of the thinking mind . . . is the essential condition of every other existence conceivable to us. . . . The only reality I cannot doubt is that of my own thought. . . . All the modern forms of idealism have their origin in the *cogito*.<sup>2</sup>

But calling him an idealist hardly seems permissible, for he stimulated and helped to found the rival school of thought. His mechanical conception of nature; his attempt to explain all material phenomena by means of extension, divisibility, and mobility; his rejection of teleological interpretations of nature; and his mechanical conceptions of the physiological organism all put him in line with important emphases of modern materialism.

Perhaps the label least misleading would be "the Great Dualist." His system was dualistic in important ways, and his conception of the dualism of mind and body has set for succeeding thinkers one of the most persistent problems of Western philosophy. Yet so many clear leads are given beyond this dualism of substances to one Substance which transcends them both,

that Spinoza could rightly assert that dualism is not the deepest aspect of Cartesian metaphysics. It is true that Descartes's language sometimes appears to contain the doctrine of "double truth" so popular with the Libertines. But the dualism was of method only, not of ultimate double truth.

We may as safely start with him as with any of the others who are to come before us—"Descartes, the Great." There is no uncertainty about the adjective. Of his intellectual creativity there is no question, or of the fact that thought was his supreme enjoyment. He fertilized the intellect of an era. He encouraged men of many nations to cast off scholastic shackles and to rely on inner witness for the test of truth. He led in that marshaling of scientific knowledge, rigorous analysis, theoretical imagination, and application of mathematics to physics which produced the greatest era of philosophical system building. Perhaps Gassendi's jesting or scornful letter addressing Descartes as "O Mind" ought to be taken as his lasting badge of honor. For in him mankind achieved its zenith of joy in the operation of mind, and perhaps we ought simply label him "the Great Philosopher," even though bestowing on him such a title would amount to overpraise.

# I. OUR DISTORTED PERSPECTIVE ON DESCARTES

We have long accepted a distorted picture of Descartes, the result of substituting a philosophy of history for the facts of history. Renouvier wrote, "Man, relieved of the religious weights with which the past has fatigued his members, demanded to breathe, to live, to think for himself . . . Pelagius was reborn . . . he lives again in Descartes."<sup>8</sup> That is the historical distortion: let the best authority on Descartes make reply. "Descartes has explicitly affirmed that he was not Pelagian.

This simply suffices to show the symbolical character of the Descartes constructed by the nineteenth century philosophers of France." <sup>4</sup> There are important ways in which the real Descartes supplements and corrects the so-called "historical" Descartes.

We are familiar with the tendency to read into the sayings of John the Baptist a knowledge of events which resulted from his work and of attributing to him the viewpoint of his mission, which a later age wrote out. On a vaster scale, the life work of early Christian leaders is often telescoped so as to attribute true creativity to Jesus alone. Similarly historians trace the actual consequences of Descartes's ideas; they then read these developments into the consciousness of Descartes and make him out to be, as they themselves so often have been, hostile to religion. In doing so they have not hesitated to brand him a liar and a coward.

His resolution never to accept a thing as true which he did not clearly know to be such has been used by his successors to destroy authoritarian claims in faith and morals, realms in which Descartes thought such a resolve unwise. It is then assumed that he must have foreseen the results. Thus the conclusion is reached that his repeated declarations that his purpose was to defend the cause of God and his acceptance of Christian doctrine were but worldly prudence—"throwing dust into the eyes of the Inquisition." To one type of modern philosopher it has become practically intolerable to imagine a truly great thinker in a church and on his knees.

We must at once admit, however, that this view of Descartes, which seems to me perverted, does have some justification. In his *Discourse on Method* he asks posterity never to believe on hearsay that anything proceeded from him unless it had been published by himself.<sup>5</sup> He knew that some of his letters had

not been carefully written and asked recipients never to show them to other readers. But the indictment can justly go beyond his realization of incautious utterances. He planned to refuse his signature for his treatise on *The World* so as to be free to disavow the book if the church proscribed it. His correspondence shows that he knew how to disguise his thought and to choose his language for any purpose. "Now that I am to be not only a spectator of the world, but am to appear an actor on the stage, I wear a mask," or as he put it in another place, "the truth must be veiled." <sup>6</sup>

Descartes's hostile critics likewise can appeal to a passage in his *Discourse* saying that they but apply to him a method which he himself proposed to use.<sup>7</sup> "In order to ascertain the real opinions [of people with whom I lived] it appeared to me I ought rather to take cognizance of what they practiced than of what they said . . . because few are disposed to speak exactly as they believe, and also because very many are not aware of what it is that they actually believe." The critics maintain that these words justify their picture of Descartes as a soldier who found prudence the better part of valor. They assert that his practice falsified his professions.

Writers have concerned themselves too long with what Leibniz thought of Descartes's God. They have thought too much of what Pascal said about the place of God in Descartes's life and Descartes's thought. They have too often decided what *we* ought to think of Descartes's God. They have read the thought of other men into the mind of our great philosopher rather than try to discover what God meant to Descartes himself.

Many students of the history of philosophy have long been victimized by this traditional injustice to Descartes. To his own contemporaries, and to many in subsequent times, Descartes was



the greatest thinker of his century. But his influence on religious thought has been so slight throughout many eras that the Archbishop of York, in his Gifford Lectures, could treat Descartes in a chapter entitled "The Cartesian Faux Pas."

Pascal's stinging judgment on Descartes may point out the reason for the religious barrenness of the greatest figure at the beginning of modern philosophy. Pascal may be unfair to his great countryman in saying that Descartes would willingly have done without God, if he could, but that he could not do without letting God give the world a filip to start it going, and that thereafter he had nothing more to do with God. The judgment may be harsh; and it may even have been prompted by something like ill will or by intellectual rivalry. And perhaps it ought, with charity, to be taken as referring to the thinker and his philosophical system rather than to the man and his life. Probably it is near enough the truth, however, to explain why this famous young French soldier of fortune, in spite of the tremendous influence he exerted on the history of thought, has come to be ignored in many studies of the meaning of Christianity.

But perhaps Pascal's remark points toward an explanation of why Descartes ushered in a new epoch in the history of thought. For undoubtedly there is a sense in which God has been the chief refuge of human ignorance; a means of stopping the intellectual quest somewhere short of knowledge; a way of quenching human curiosity with a word, rather than with clear ideas. It is always a question whether the bringing of God into a discussion is more than verbal; whether anything of new content is added. Perhaps we shall be compelled to admit that human thought is driven to its uttermost only when we make no unnecessary references to God. It may even be that piety itself

reaches its highest development with this same refusal to reckon God as being merely one of the factors in this world of forces. Men have been put to death as atheists because they believed in God in a far higher sense than did other men who were socially acceptable and safe because they believed in common gods or worshiped only with the multitude.

Recent French work on this greatest thinker of France has seemingly invalidated any notion that his work can be disposed of as an unfortunate *faux pas*. The great work of Gouhier on the religious thought of Descartes has been especially compelling in this respect, and its having been crowned by the French Academy proves its true importance.

It now seems clear that Descartes took seriously the division between philosophy and theology taught him at a Jesuit college. According to that view theology was that body of truth which could not be gained by use of human powers—where truth is, not discovered, but disclosed. Philosophy, on the other hand, was the total body of knowledge which our minds, unaided, can acquire. "Philosophy . . . embraces all that the human mind can know."<sup>8</sup> And with this division made, there is no doubt as to where Descartes placed himself. It seems that he was aware of superhuman aid and that he felt himself endowed with those more-than-human qualities upon which he thought the theologian must depend. He kept his vow to make a pilgrimage to Loretto, in acknowledgment of supernatural dreams and direct divine aid. But that divine visitation did not invalidate his personal feeling that he had a mission. It seemed, instead, to be a divine ordination to use his reason in the quest of certainty and to decide between pretended revelations.

Many philosophers have belittled and despised theologians as such; Descartes is not of their number. Rather, he recog-

nized the division between theology and philosophy as a wise economy. Largely through his influence religion and philosophy were reconciled in the second half of the seventeenth century, so that they formed a harmonious whole.<sup>9</sup> Later men used his principles to belittle all things theological and religious which were not within the bounds of reason. But it seems now reasonably assured that Descartes spoke sincerely in his frequent tributes to religion. He believed in the life hereafter, in a genuine heaven. He believed, as the church had taught him, that reason had justified belief in its existence, but could not give him passports valid there. He accepted, simply and sincerely, the claims of the Church to a more than human authority, and he made his peace with religion on terms which it decreed.

But Descartes's loyalty to his Church and faith did not require that he surrender his role as a courageous thinker. It is true that he did exercise caution and that he wanted his writings published under conditions acceptable to the Church. But his own practical philosophy fortified him in this position, and the tone of many of his letters seems to indicate genuine piety rather than cowardly prudence. In a letter to Father Vatier we have material that is of great importance for understanding Descartes—both as a thinker and as a Christian. He replies to the Jesuit father's criticism,

It is true that I have been too obscure in what I have written about the existence of God in this discourse on Method, and although this is the most important part, I confess that it is the least elaborated of the whole work; which is due in part to the fact that I resolved to add it only at the end, and when the publisher was hurrying me. But the primary reason for its obscurity is attributable to the fact that I have not dared to enlarge on the arguments of the sceptics, nor to say all the things necessary "for leading the mind

away from the senses": for it is possible to know thoroughly the certitude of, and the evidence for, the considerations which prove the existence of God according to my method, only by distinctly remembering the reasons which make us notice the uncertainty in all the knowledge which we have of material things; and these thoughts have not seemed to me proper to put in a book in which I wanted even the women to be able to understand something, and in which the keenest might also find matter enough to engage their attention. I acknowledge also that this obscurity comes in part, as you have well noticed, from the fact that I supposed that certain ideas, which the habit of thinking has rendered familiar and clear to me, ought to be familiar and clear to everyone, too: as, for example, [the idea that] our ideas, being able to receive their forms or their being only from some exterior objects or from ourselves, cannot represent any reality or perfection, which is not in these objects or else in us . . .

It is my belief that what I said I put in my *Dissertation on Light*, concerning the creation of the Universe, would be unbelievable; for only ten years ago I myself would not have wanted to believe that the human intellect had been able to reach such knowledge, if someone else had written it. But my perception and the power of truth have prevented my fearing to assert a thing which I have believed impossible to omit without betraying my proper role . . .

I have no more to reply to you, except affecting the publication of my *Physique* and *Métaphysique*, about which I can tell you, in a word, that I desire publication as much as anyone, but under conditions without which I would be unwise to want it. And I will tell you also that I by no means only fear that something be found therein against the Faith; for, on the contrary, I dare to boast that it (Faith) has never been so strongly sustained by human arguments as it can be if one follows my principles . . . But I see no likelihood that the conditions which can bind me in duty may be realized, at least for a long time; and contenting myself with doing for my part all that I believe to be my duty, I trust, for the rest, in Providence which rules the world; for, knowing that it is she who has given me the little beginnings of which you have seen some samples, I hope that she will do me the favor of putting the finishing hand to

it, if it is useful for her glory; and if it is not, I want to refrain from desiring it.<sup>10</sup>

The philosopher who wrote that letter was making no false pretense of courage. And had his piety been feigned, would he not have gone beyond that simple final statement that he wanted to refrain from desiring anything which was not for the glory of God?

## 2. THE ARISTOCRAT OF THOUGHT

Descartes accepted the church's teaching that a man's salvation does not require his individual reasoning. For reasons veiled in the infinite wisdom of God, ignorant men and even idiots may receive through grace the gift of heaven. Other lesser values are likewise not dependent on the thought processes of men. Custom and unreflective practice shape many social institutions better than could be done by the conscious efforts of thinkers. Institutional imperfections are modified by time; their defects are removed or corrected insensibly; their condition is commonly better than sagacity could have achieved. That is why, in general, he condemns the efforts of self-appointed social reformers and why he thinks the fall of the huge bodies of society always disastrous. One can work this kind of revolution in his own opinions, but social realities are not equally amenable to reformation, and the major reconstructions in social life are largely unintended.<sup>11</sup>

Descartes felt no inner call to lay down conditions for man's salvation or to reason out the content of experience in an after life. Further, he felt himself without desire to be regarded as a man of importance in the world, saying, "I shall always count the enjoyment of undisturbed leisure a greater favor than the highest earthly preferments."<sup>12</sup> But his leisure was not spent

in amassing the scraps of information so often mistaken for learning. He was no restless and greedy collector of opinions. Such collecting seemed to him fatal to methodical thought, which advances slowly, taking each step with utmost care. "If we had read every word of Plato and Aristotle, without the certainty of our own judgment, we should not have advanced a step in philosophy: we should have increased our historical knowledge but not our knowledge of truth."<sup>13</sup> Every dependence upon the opinions of others is a false step, a departure from thought's true goal. And people who seem to think that learning consists in knowing Latin need to be reminded that Rome's ignorant masses could speak that language.

"The appearance of truth . . . can be found without much difficulty in all sorts of matters."<sup>14</sup> But finding truth itself is an arduous enterprise, for which some men are not equipped. The quest of truth requires stripping ourselves of beliefs uncritically formed in infancy and childhood. Failure to do this is really to prefer self-delusion to knowledge. For those who are competent to use sound method in thinking, satisfying certainty may be attained. But there is a strictly limited aristocracy in thought.

"To live without philosophizing is in truth the same as keeping the eyes closed without attempting to open them; and the pleasure of seeing all that sight discloses is not to be compared with the satisfaction afforded by the discoveries of philosophy."<sup>15</sup> There are many such passages which show that rational cognition is regarded by Descartes as a kind of natural revelation. "This method, from the time I had begun to apply it, has been to me the source of satisfaction so intense as to lead me to believe that any more perfect or more innocent could not be enjoyed in this life . . . the gratification thence

arising so occupied my mind that I was wholly indifferent to every other object." <sup>16</sup> In words he places incomparably above the joy of thinking the more perfect bliss of heaven. But one searches his works in vain for any outburst of rapturous joy at the assurance of heaven. "For just as by faith we learn that . . . the supreme felicity of another life consists in the contemplation of the divine majesty alone, so even now we learn from experience that a like meditation, though incomparably less perfect, is the source of the highest satisfaction of which we are susceptible in this life." <sup>17</sup> It is knowledge of "true principles by which we may reach that highest degree of wisdom wherein consists the sovereign good of human life." <sup>18</sup>

The chief part of man is the mind. "Men . . . ought to make the search after wisdom their principal care, for wisdom is the true nourishment of the mind. . ." <sup>19</sup> "For since God has endowed each of us with some light of reason by which to distinguish truth from error, I could not have believed that I ought for a single moment to rest satisfied with the opinions of another, unless I had resolved to exercise my own judgment in examining these when I should be duly qualified for the task." <sup>20</sup>

This supreme pleasure of the present life, however, is not something for which every man should be encouraged to strive. It requires the application of a principle of universal doubt in which nothing can be exempt. But Descartes will not counsel any man to make use of his method. "I do not counsel anyone to make a similar attempt. . . . The resolve to strip one's self of all past beliefs is not an example for every man." "The majority of men is composed of two classes, for neither of which would this be at all a befitting resolution." <sup>21</sup> It is only for those aristocrats of thought, who, like himself, are naturally

equipped or divinely ordained to undertake a difficult labor. It becomes a vicarious service to the commonalty of men who are not so well endowed in mind. But it gives, in itself, the most exalted satisfaction the present life affords.

### 3. THE SOLDIER OF TRUTH

It was typical of Descartes that he became a volunteer soldier and paid his own expenses. He was in all his work a soldier and a volunteer. Every great endeavor of his life became a battle. He was never a conscript under orders, but the free volunteer who does not fight for pay. His life as a soldier often shaped the description of his work; even as philosopher he was still engaged in war. "For he truly engages in battle who endeavors to surmount all the difficulties and errors which prevent him from reaching the knowledge of truth, and he is overcome in fight who admits a false opinion touching a matter of any generality and importance."<sup>22</sup>

Descartes recognized his own extreme liability to error. That is why he could "scarce ever trust the first thoughts" which occurred to him;<sup>23</sup> and that is why, in the battle for truth, in the struggle against intellectual self-deception, his name stands high among the world's warriors of the mind.<sup>24</sup> Knowing his weakness, he was obliged to exercise extremer care.

This soldier of truth was not confused by the roar of battle. He held repose as of greater account than all else. This statement is not only made to the public, but it is also repeated to his intimate friends.<sup>25</sup> That is the explanation of his motto, "To live happily, live in concealment." In secret and in silence the world's greatest battles may be fought! His undisturbed retirement, made possible in Holland by ample inheritance, was preferable to the highest earthly preferments.<sup>26</sup>



Descartes's withdrawal from social routine made him the rationalistic rival of cloistered monks who had fled the world. At other times the parallel is closer to Aristotle's God, whose perfect existence was an eternal thinking on thought.

Indifferent to the life of the court, to military glory, to the pleasures of society and the superstitions of social rank . . . Descartes conceived no other ideal than that of a perfectly disciplined will placed at the service of a perfectly clear reason. "Seek peace in wisdom" was the profound aspiration of this man who lived by thought alone for thought alone. . . . Never was an existence more noble than his.<sup>27</sup>

That true nobility is the reason he attached no importance to his position among the titled Gentlemen of France.

The flight from the world was not for Descartes an ethical revulsion against society such as we shall find in Pascal. It was only because social obligations interfered with thought. It is true that the authorities in Paris were at the time hostile to free investigation, and he probably idealized his reasons for living in Holland by failing to make personal safety one of his motives.<sup>28</sup> And yet Holland did afford him the solitude he required in the quest of truth. In Paris a social whirl kept his energies on pleasant trivialities. In the metropolis of the world friends would not respect his leisure or permit him the long hours of needed sleep and the undisturbed mornings in bed, where through most of his life he did his best work. It was for some such reasons that "the greatest thinker of France was perhaps the only Frenchman who could not live in Paris."<sup>29</sup> There was too much temptation for those who headed the social whirl to satirize the sleeping soldier, fighting his battles for truth in bed.

The pictures this French recluse draws of himself rival the portraits then being painted by his great contemporaries in

Dutch art. He has learned that peace and tranquility of mind are goods not available for those who have either hatred or ambition. These are states of mind fitting enough and even helpful for actors in life's drama, but not for one who desires rather to be a spectator.

I have become [he says in a famous letter to Balzac] so much of a philosopher that I set but little value on much that the world esteems, while I put high value on other things that are usually considered worthless . . . I do not despise renown when one is really able, as you are, to earn a great and solid reputation . . . I sleep here ten hours every night, without being wakened by a single care. I dream only of beautiful things, of woods and gardens and the enchanted palaces of legends; and when I awake I find myself with still greater delight in the actual world which surrounds me.<sup>80</sup>

Instead of making his home in one place, he moved frequently, finding most satisfaction in some place close to a Catholic church. In Dutch villages and in Amsterdam itself he found himself little noticed. "In this great city where I am," he writes from busy Amsterdam, "there is scarcely any man except myself who does not handle merchandise; each is so attentive to his own profit that I could live here all my life without ever being seen by anybody." When he compares his freedom there with the servile constraints one is subjected to at court, Descartes for once makes spontaneous use of the language of religion. Balzac had stated to Descartes his purpose to seek retirement, and he mentioned the servility of court life. Descartes replied, "Since you earnestly assure me that God has inspired you to leave the world, I believe I would sin against the Holy Spirit, if I should try to dissuade you from so sacred a resolve."

Descartes then expounded Holland's advantages over Italy.

But Descartes's own letters are sufficient to prove how literary and idealized is the self-portrait given in his *Discourse on Method*. He says that he "esteemed eloquence highly and was in raptures with poesy,"<sup>81</sup> and he did actually amuse himself, later, by working on a poetical masque for the court of Sweden.<sup>82</sup> But it seems clear that the philosophy of Descartes was lacking in appreciation of many forms of art. Living in Holland in the days of Rembrandt, Descartes could feel himself almost the only man in Holland not a merchant! That proof of his restricted horizon ought to be remembered when we read his charges that the Dutch "do not defend honesty and virtue, since they fear the frowns of theologians."<sup>83</sup> One who could fail to notice Rembrandt cannot be wholly trusted to describe the life of Holland.

The earliest intellectual enthusiasm of this quietistic soldier of truth was for mathematics. But this love of what we would call purely formal truth waned with his full maturity. The mystical experience of the tenth of November, 1619, filled him with joy, and wide horizons were opened. As he put it himself, in the distance the Olympic peaks of knowledge were ablaze with beckoning light. The study of physics, a treatise on light, the pursuit of physiological and psychological investigations came at last to make mere mathematics almost distasteful. In a late letter he wrote thus about the subject which had once been his chief joy: "Do not expect anything more from me, if you please, in geometry, for you know that for a long time now I have protested that I wished to exercise myself there no more, and I could honestly make an end of it."<sup>84</sup>

This subsiding of interest in mathematics did not mean a cessation of intellectual activity. It meant only a change of direction for his investigation. "I am willing," he writes, "to

have it known that the little knowledge I have gained is almost nothing in comparison with that of which I am ignorant, and to the knowledge of which I hope to be able to attain." The sword was still drawn against ignorance and error. "Let, then your thought pass for a little while beyond this world, that you may behold another wholly new one which I shall cause to rise to view in imaginary spaces." <sup>85</sup>

This passage from the sixth chapter of his treatise on the world shows that Descartes knew how to use a speculative imagination. But the use of imagination and the close use of reason did not absorb many hours of his daily life—though he counted them most important. He gave far more time to the investigation of the actual nature about him. He dissected the heads of animals and traced the nerves and brain fibers in order to ascertain in what memory consists. When visitors asked to see his library, he pointed to a quarter of veal. He kept informed on scientific achievements in many parts of Europe and suggested research topics to other students. The volunteer for truth became a general; and with Cartesianism to defend, he showed himself able to plan the strategy of intellectual battle.

#### 4. GOD AND CERTAINTY

Even more than in the case of most philosophers, no summary of Descartes's positions should be taken as a substitute for reading the classics which he wrote. For we have from Descartes masterpieces of mental autobiography. His writings have a charm of language. They manifest a supreme gift in the clear expression of difficult ideas, and they are unsurpassed in conveying a vivid sense of the relevance of philosophy to life. It is sheer folly for a commentator to summarize the account of his youthful delight in mathematics or of his disappoint-

ment that no greater thought structure had been erected thereon. From him alone should one take the description of his escape from the superfluous subtleties of professional philosophers; of the way in which he was "led to infer that the ground of our opinions is far more custom and example than any certain knowledge"; of his slow realization "that a plurality of suffrages is no guarantee of truth where it is at all difficult of discovery"; and of his finding himself at last constrained to use his reason in the conduct of his life.<sup>36</sup>

One brief quotation from his *Discourse on Method* puts before us an important dualism which marks his thought. "I had long before remarked," he says, "that in relation to practice it is sometimes necessary to adopt, as if above doubt, opinions which we discern to be highly uncertain." <sup>37</sup> In other words, as a matter of practical efficiency one ought to regard as certain the probability on which one's action is based.

His second rule in the *Discourse* gives this idea its classic form.

It is very certain that, when it is not in our power to determine what is true, we ought to act according to what is most probable; and even though we should not reach a greater probability in one opinion than in another, we ought notwithstanding to choose one opinion or the other, and afterwards consider it, in so far as it relates to practice, as no longer dubious, but manifestly true and certain . . . This principle was sufficient thenceforward to rid me of all those repentings and pangs of remorse that usually disturb the consciences of such feeble and uncertain minds as . . . allow themselves one day to adopt a course of action as the best, which they abandon the next as the opposite.

In matters of theory, however, there is needed not only another method but also one directly contrary.

But as I then desired [he continues] to give my attention solely to the search after truth, I thought that a procedure exactly the opposite was called for, and that I ought to reject as absolutely false all opinions in regard to which I could suppose the least grounds for doubt, in order to ascertain whether after that there remained aught in my belief that was wholly indubitable.

The intensity of effort, the imaginative abandon with which Descartes carried through his method of doubt is one of reason's great achievements. His initial resolve never to accept anything as true which he did not clearly know to be such; his carefully planned avoidance of precipitancy and prejudice; his anticipation of satisfaction from having a mind accustomed to the love of truth and to a distaste for unsound reasonings—these enable us to understand why the solitary thinker was so quickly the head of a great intellectual movement and why even to this day many students first catch an enthusiasm for thought by reading Descartes.

He is a master in the detection of errors. He rejects invitations to elaborate side issues. He will not spin out the subtleties: he knows what it is to know and when knowledge is enough. "The child . . . who has been instructed in the elements of arithmetic, and has made a particular addition, according to rule, may be assured that he has found, with respect to the sum of numbers before him, all that in this instance is within the reach of human genius."<sup>88</sup>

The first step in certainty, one which is emphatically established as true even in the effort to doubt it, is that he exists when he thinks or wills or feels and even when he doubts or is deceived. "Every conception which I have is my conception; and every conception, therefore, proves more certainly than it does anything else, that I am." There is an invincible certainty

of self-existence which comes with every thought. Let some powerful demon deceive him; he must exist in order to be deceived.<sup>39</sup>

But a vast number of assumptions as to the nature of a self are not at once rushed in. The certainty given by his *cogito* warrants one thing only—that he is a being whose essence is thought, whose very nature consists in that alone. “I thence concluded that I was a substance whose sole essence or nature consists only in thinking, and which, that it may exist, has no need of place, nor is dependent on any material thing.”<sup>40</sup> Thus it seemed perfectly clear to him that there is an absolute difference between mind and body: “that body from its nature, is always divisible, and that mind is entirely indivisible.”<sup>41</sup>

✓ It must be pointed out that Descartes is not open here to the charge of solipsism, the name for thinking that only one's self exists. He was not discussing being as such; he was talking about certainty. The *cogito* was an argument not at all that he was the first being to exist, but rather the being whose existence he first certainly knows. God was, of course, the first reality.<sup>42</sup>

It would be just to say that Descartes does not so much discuss the nature of God as use God. And the chief use he makes of God is as guarantor of other steps in certainty. Only through God can he rightly be certain of anything other than his own existence. There is nothing else that performs the same service.

We cannot here follow the long and intricately argued chain of reasoning through which Descartes takes his further steps in certainty. The point of our present interest is to insist that God was absolutely indispensable for Descartes as a thinker; that the existence of God and ideas of the nature of God are the necessary presuppositions of any advance beyond that immediacy of personal self-existence which is certified anew with

each act of thought or will. A number of passages in which this point is made will show how utterly unable Descartes was to be certain without God of anything beyond an "I am," which was true everytime he thought.

How do we know that the thoughts which occur in dreaming are false rather than those which we experience when awake, since the former are often not less vivid and distinct than the latter? And though men of the highest genius may study this question as long as they please, I do not believe that they will be able to give any reason which can be sufficient to remove this doubt, unless they presuppose the existence of God.<sup>43</sup>

The existence of God is the first and most eternal of all the truths which can exist, and the one from which all others proceed.<sup>44</sup>

All other propositions, of the truth of which men are more assured, such as that they have bodies, or the earth exists, and stars, are in fact less certain.<sup>45</sup>

Descartes thus thinks it impossible that the human mind can know anything with more clearness and certitude than that God exists. "Although the right conception of this truth has cost me much close thinking, nevertheless at present I feel not only as assured of it as of what I deem most certain, but I remark further that the certitude of all other truths is so absolutely dependent on it, that without this knowledge it is impossible ever to know anything perfectly."<sup>46</sup> Thus knowledge of the existence of God is not dependent on revelation. It is a necessity for any sound philosophy. And in showing this Descartes thought that philosophy rendered to religion and theology an important service. It shows that the being from whom religion claims to have revelation does exist. Thus the foes of faith are prevented from saying that faith rests only on faith.



At this point Descartes actually displaces the main axis of previous philosophy.<sup>47</sup> According to him the existence of God cannot be demonstrated by examining the nature of the world. It is known, rather, only from consideration of his nature alone;<sup>48</sup> and the necessary identity between God's essence and existence is, he maintains, rationally discerned by close thinking. He recognizes that his own thought imposes no necessity on things; that it is possible to imagine a winged horse, though there be none such. But the case of God, he insists, is not analogous, "and a fallacy lurks under the semblance of this objection."<sup>49</sup>

To subsequent thinkers Descartes was seemingly content with a ready-made idea of God. Numerous scholastic axioms were too readily taken as axiomatic. Certain attributes of God, on which the steps in system building depended, were apparently taken uncritically from common consent. He left the idea of God so largely unexamined that other thinkers were set the task of studying how our ideas do arise. He does not sufficiently explain the important statement, used at several points in his system, that existence is a perfection. He probably borrowed much from Anselm, which is not sufficiently acknowledged, and it often seems that the Bible and Saint Thomas's *Summa* got over into his thought of God in ways his published system did not permit. The actual basis of many passages appears to be an idea which Saint Thomas held—that the supreme knowledge that we can have of God in this present life is to know that he is above all that we can think of him.

It now seems certain, too, that Descartes used fallacious reasoning in his contention that since the idea of God deals with the infinite, it could not have been produced by any finite being; that consequently it must have come from an infinite

being; and that the source of our idea of an infinite being is the infinite God himself. In order to be valid, as Höffding has put it so well, the idea itself would need to be infinite.<sup>50</sup> But there are no just grounds for thinking that ideas as such thus partake of the qualities of their objects. The idea of a ton weighs no more than the idea of a pound, and the idea of an inch is probably as long as the idea of a mile.

# 5. GOD AND SCIENCE

According to Descartes more knowledge of God than merely that he exists is available for purposes of thought. Thus, "it is certain that he can create everything we can conceive."<sup>51</sup> And God is immutable, "as everybody ought to know."<sup>52</sup> As many as five times in his *Meditations* Descartes uses it as an axiom that God is no deceiver, and in his *Principles of Philosophy*, likewise, we find the same axiom variously expressed. He thought that this immutability of God is the needed foundation for physics and for all serious scientific research. "Certain laws," he says, "have been established in nature by God in such manner, of which he has impressed on our minds such notions, that after we have reflected sufficiently upon these, we cannot doubt that they are accurately observed in all that exists or takes place in the world."<sup>53</sup> Sometimes the customary duality of language fails, and Descartes speaks of God or Nature in full Spinozistic manner. In one of the most noteworthy of these, he says "It is certain that there must be truth in every thing which nature teaches us. For by nature, in general, I understand nothing other than God himself or the world order established by God, and by my own nature in particular, nothing more than the assemblage of all the powers God has lent to me."<sup>54</sup>

Descartes is frequently charged with denying final causes in

nature. The truth is rather that he banished them from science. The talk of banishing final causes from nature would have seemed to him irreverent and preposterous. He did not deny teleology in nature. Science is our enterprise, but science is not nature. Nature is a realm of dependable order, indirectly or immediately the very immutability of God himself; and Descartes emphatically did believe in and maintain the existence of final causes in nature. But science cannot seek them out and ought not to assume that because natural processes serve men this service is the final purpose of God. Descartes would even forbid the effort to find these final purposes: instead of that, we should discover the dependabilities of nature and use them for the good of men. It is "presumptuous for us mortals to try to comprehend God's designs, since his liberty is absolute and infinite." <sup>55</sup> "It seemed to him willful temerity to inquire after the purposes of God." <sup>56</sup>

Nor should the same end be accomplished by the theologians, working from the other side. Descartes strongly opposed the attempt of theologians to make their revelations the basis of science. Hence, while a teleological interpretation of nature is theoretically possible, because the divine purposes in nature are actual, it is not actually valid in science. Thus, the dependability of God is an encouraging charter for careful study: it is the ground of our hope for scientific success. But those actual final purposes of God can never furnish us the solutions of specific research problems. They are forever hidden from our knowledge, safe in the infinite and inscrutable mind of God.

It is revealed truth which offers to us the way to life eternal, but it is science which opens to us the highest goods of earthly life. It is his hope to found a "universal science which can elevate our nature to its highest perfection." He regards it as

certain that God has foreordained all things. For Descartes, as certainly as for Calvin himself, man's ultimate destiny is placed beyond the chance of final control by incidental factors or by earthly institutions. This work of divine grace, through which alone there is a raising of our souls to heaven, as we know by revelation, leaves man thus free to work for human good, undisturbed by anxious fears about his own salvation.

The same trust should characterize us as we undergo the vicissitudes of life. The knowledge that all is ordered should give us fortitude. Numerous passages seem like those in which Leibniz later wrote of the best of all possible worlds. We can thus understand his saying that it is pious and wise to conquer ourselves rather than fortune and his advice that we should change our desires rather than set ourselves to change the order of the world.<sup>57</sup>

We must, then, set entirely aside the vulgar opinion that there is outside of us a Fortune which causes things to happen or not to happen in accordance with its pleasure, and we must recognize that all is conducted by Divine Providence, whose eternal decree is so infallible and immutable, that, excepting the things that this same decree has willed to leave dependent on our free-will, we ought to reflect that in relation to us nothing happens which is not necessary . . . and that we cannot without error desire that it should happen otherwise.<sup>58</sup>

As we have already seen, the attainment of knowledge is a joy in itself. But the philosophy which Descartes longed to establish had an instrumental value as well: it was as full of practical aid for humanity as anything that Bacon proposed.

I perceived it to be possible [he says] to arrive at knowledge highly useful in life . . . in place of the Speculative Philosophy . . . to discover a Practical, by means of which . . . we might . . . render ourselves the lords and possessors of nature . . . It is true that the

science of medicine, as it now exists, contains . . . things whose utility is very remarkable: but without any wish to depreciate it, I am confident that there is no one, even among those whose profession it is, who does not admit that all at present known in it is almost nothing in comparison with what remains to be discovered.<sup>59</sup>

And by the use we make of knowledge is our virtue judged. "We are bound to promote, as far as in us lies, the general good of mankind." Indeed, while others may have the appearance of virtue, it is only those who have the common good of man at heart who are virtuous in very truth.<sup>60</sup>

#### 6. DESCARTES AND CHRIST

Considering how often Descartes stated that he put religion first, it is amazing how rarely one finds in his writings any mention of Jesus Christ. He wrote that he "revered our Theology, and aspired as much as any one to reach heaven" and that "the truths of Faith . . . have ever occupied the first place in my belief." Yet his *Discourse on Method* has not a single mention of the one whom Christians call the Way or even a phrase to construe as an indirect reference to Christ. Even when dedicating his metaphysical *Meditations* to the theological doctors of the Sorbonne, Descartes fails to mention the Lord.

Throughout the six books of the *Meditations* the same holds true. There are endless pages on God's existence; that God cannot be a deceiver; and many arguments in favor of his power and goodness. But the volume contains no reference to Christ. In the selections from the *Principles of Philosophy* given in the Open Court edition I find that God is not corporeal, that he is eternal, omniscient, omnipotent, the source of all goodness and truth, the creator of all things and that he has in himself all that in which we can clearly discover any infinite perfection. But there is not the slightest indication that the author of these

works had ever even heard of the Jesus who was called Christ.

This silence becomes still more surprising when one examines Descartes's personal correspondence. In all his letters to the Princess Elizabeth he never really departs from the position of a Stoic philosopher, although he was called on to condole her on exile and severe sickness and on the execution of her royal uncle. Similarly, in a letter to Huyghens in his time of bereavement the common Christian phrases of comfort and hope are lacking. Yet Descartes could hardly have written to any friends in greater need of the consolations of religion. There are grounds of comfort given, it is true, and they are based on belief in God; but it is not unfair to say that the letters have no strong sense of communion with God. Throughout, the sentiments expressed are derived from his philosophy rather than from his religion.

In dedicating the *Principles* to the Princess Elizabeth our author says that he will write "only as becomes a philosopher," but it is easy to find fulsome praise of the princess. One might therefore expect from him some outbursts in praise of Christ. But Descartes finds it possible to discuss morals, which he understands as the highest and most perfect science, still without a reference to Christ. And yet he insisted that his was a *Christian* philosophy, which accorded better with the Faith than did any of the previous systems.

In my hundreds of notes from Descartes's own writings and from many books about him there is one probable reference to a teaching of Jesus and one clear mention of his name. The former is in a letter to Mersenne, in which Descartes replies to Mersenne's question as to the accord of Christian virtues with natural virtues. "I do not know what I can say," Descartes begins, "except that even as in making straight a curved stick,

one not only stands it erect but presses it on the other side, God commands us not only to pardon our enemies, but even to do them good; and so of others." <sup>61</sup>

For the one actual mention of the name of Christ, I am indebted to Gouhier. The same author gives us a clue to the almost astounding silence of Descartes about Christ, a silence more difficult to explain than that of Boethius. The explanation is that Descartes was here faithful to his own principles—in his treatment of God and in his use of God he did not become a theologian. For him faith is essentially a supernatural action, while the philosopher is limited to the realm of nature, even though his work be divinely sanctioned. Faith is not an effort of man toward God, but an action of God on man. Like Pascal, he believed in different orders of reality. As a philosopher, true to his own principles, Descartes absolutely refused to take up subjects which exceeded the powers God had given him or which belonged to a realm with which he was not commissioned to deal. Those subjects belonged to other men and required other powers. "The conferring of grace exceeds all rules." And there is one great function of grace, one which reason cannot serve. The one important matter is to gain heaven, and to gain heaven, he says, "It is necessary to believe in Jesus Christ and other things revealed, which depends on grace." <sup>62</sup>

Although Gouhier may have failed to note this particular fact, it seems important here to point out that neither Huyghens nor the Princess Elizabeth was a member of the Roman Catholic Church. According to the doctrine of that church the consolations of the Christian faith were not really available to them, and Descartes would have departed from his position as a loyal Catholic had he implied that these heretics and schismatics should be experiencing the consolations and comforts of the

Christian faith. So what he offered them was what philosophy made available. That was neither heresy nor schism.

Today we are heirs of other traditions. Throughout subsequent generations men have tried to discover an order in the supernatural and to make both theology and religion material for scientific study. If we hold that religion has to do with the whole of life, we almost instinctively feel that Descartes's silence on Jesus Christ is really due to practical unbelief. It is probably much nearer the truth, and more revealing, to say that his belief in Christ was practical, not theoretical, but that his own work was with theory, lying within the field of reason. The rigid adherence to his principle of the separation of philosophy from theology is precisely what we should expect of the man competent to execute his rigorous philosophical method. Christ was not a philosopher appealing to reason. He was a revelation of God, and he was significant, not for philosophy, but for faith. Descartes lacked the inspiration which alone could give valid results in that realm. He was a philosopher; he could not reason his way to heaven. His hope of eternal life was in God's grace revealed through Jesus Christ, belief in whom transcended reason and surpassed intelligibility. And this belief was as necessary for the wisest philosopher as for a little child. This was the belief of Descartes; and this was his *hope*. But God likewise had given him an endowment and a mission and a field for his labor. This world was the field; the equipment was mind; and his mission was to *know*.

"I have never made profession of the study of theology," he says, "and have applied myself to it only so far as I believed it necessary for my own instruction, and . . . I do not at all sense in myself a divine inspiration, which makes me capable to judge and teach it." <sup>83</sup> "Who knows if the minds of children



of Adam mount on high, and if the minds of animals go below? That is to say, who can know, by the force of human reason, and unless holding to that which God has revealed to us, if the minds of men will enjoy eternal blessedness? Certainly I have tried to prove by natural reason that the soul of man is not corporeal; but to know if it will mount on high, that is to say, if it will enjoy the glory of God, I have avowed that there is nothing except faith alone which can let us know it." <sup>04</sup>

Descartes's sense that he lacked the special fitness required for theology cannot fairly be interpreted as a scorn of theology or as a practical unbelief. It is true that he was unwilling to support the things of faith by reason. But great belief is at least as good an explanation for that as is actual disbelief. At least Descartes himself says that he, a philosopher, lacking the qualifications for dealing with the matters of eternal import, refrained from treating the things of faith because reason, in things surpassing it, must ever give something less than the maximum of rational certainty. Thus, reason's support may become an actual disservice to faith.

On this point one of his letters is important. After renewing his affirmation that he has proofs of the existence of God which are more certain than any proposition in geometry, and after expressing his wish to propagate it, he explains why it seems to him best not to try to do so.

I do not know if I would be able to make it understood to everybody, in the same way that I grasp it; and I believe it better not to touch at all on a matter of this kind than to treat it imperfectly. The universal consent of all peoples is quite sufficient to defend the Deity against the attacks of the atheists, and a private individual ought never enter a dispute against them, if he is not assured of conquering them.

What shall we do with this question raised by the foremost founder of modern philosophy? Ought Christian apologetics forego reason's somewhat doubtful and inconclusive aid? Is conviction strongest when reason is not trying to support it, as Seneca long ago said about his own belief in immortality? However that question is answered, the distress that real believers feel over the usual half-successful apologetics will enable them to recognize that belief may express itself by other means than talk. And those who continue to regard Descartes's affirmations of loyalty to Christian faith as dictated by prudence, by caution, or even by cowardice ought to think this question through again. Did he not do what he would have done had he believed what he said he believed?

#### 7. A REFUSAL TO PHILOSOPHIZE?

As we have seen, Descartes repeatedly and specifically excluded faith and social and political life from the scope of his method of doubt. In such matters an opposite method seemed to him suitable and wise. "Above all," he says in his *Principles*, "we must impress on our memory the infallible rule, that what God has revealed is incomparably more certain than anything else." <sup>65</sup> Of similar purport is his emphatic denial of the possibility of deception in a revelation. This truth "is the basis and foundation of the Christian religion, since all the certitude of one's faith depends on it. How could we have faith in the things God has revealed to us, if we think that we are sometimes deceived?" <sup>66</sup>

Descartes says of theology that "it is a science which surpasses the powers of the human mind." <sup>67</sup> For him, "the truths of religion are carefully set apart and withdrawn from the criticism of reason. They do not fall under its jurisdiction. It is not

ours to examine them, but to believe them. We must seek neither to adapt them to reason nor to adapt our reason to them. They belong to another domain." <sup>68</sup> Keeling and Levy-Bruhl are thus led to assert:

The distinction between Theology and Metaphysics Descartes regarded as clear, absolute, and final . . . Both contain propositions about God and his relations to the world. Those belong to Metaphysics which have been demonstrated by reason and their acceptance enjoined by reason; those belong to Theology which have been disclosed through revelation and the acceptance enjoined by faith and authority.<sup>69</sup>

Practically this same distinction between the natural and the supernatural is made by so many thoughtful contemporaries that it ought to be possible for us to credit Descartes with holding it in sincerity. The tendency manifested by many thinkers to make this great philosopher agree with themselves is as pathetically fallacious as forcing pacifism on Jesus when we become convinced opponents of war or compelling him to give up drinking when we become abstainers. The fact is that great minds are often in disagreement with our beliefs and out of accord with our practice.

There is no need for thinking it was a mere "prudent dodge" when Descartes excused himself from answering Mersenne's theological questions.

That is why you permit me, if you please, to say absolutely nothing: not that the reasonings of the libertines have any force, for they seem to me frivolous and ridiculous; but because I hold it a wrong to the eternal truths which depend on the faith and cannot be proved by natural reasonings, that one wish to affirm them by probable and human reasons only.<sup>70</sup>

There was nothing in his actual situation to demand of Descartes a cowardly withdrawal from publication of his scien-

tific theories. He was in Holland, where according to Gassendi, everybody was for the earth's motion, where belief in the Copernican theory was not punished.<sup>71</sup> Descartes's safety did not require a cringing submission to the Roman Catholic Church, nor can we find anything in outward circumstances to compel withdrawal of "the least word which was disapproved by the church."<sup>72</sup> In fact we have proof that he considered renouncing France and becoming a citizen of Holland, where his fame was spreading.<sup>73</sup> "And in the end of the matter, if the French do me too much injustice, I shall turn to the Gentiles."

What required of Descartes the practical loss of four years of his labor need not have been anxiety about his personal safety or fear for his financial income. Loyalty to his own principles may have required surrender of an heretical opinion. With a sincere belief in the value of theology, which he had frequently expressed, he could not easily wave infallible authorities aside simply because he thought they were assuming authority in matters outside their jurisdiction. It is not easy to disregard authority, accepted as infallible in a certain field, when that authority defines or circumscribes its field. Descartes afterward insisted on the merit of the new statement about the earth's motion which he worked out after Galileo's statement had been condemned.<sup>74</sup> He insisted that his redefinition of motion had merit; that he had "not invented an artifice to disguise the truth"; that there thus resulted, even from the theologians' invasion of the field of science, an improved statement of a scientific theory. For Descartes's revised statement, resulting from the attitude of the Church, leans decidedly toward the formulations drawn up under the influence of relativity theories in our own day.

According to Descartes man's reason is not adequate for the

mysteries of faith. In faith there comes a divine gift, some favor to the will which is necessary for belief. "Faith does not conduct us by degrees, but at a stroke raises us to an infallible belief." <sup>76</sup> Indeed, no psychology of religion is here possible in a supernatural action so sudden and so decisive: "there is scarcely place for spiritual struggles, resistances to grace, the deliberations—in brief, the religious phenomena which psychology believing or unbelieving, can study as natural facts. For Descartes, one remark suffices: 'Idiots and ignorant people can possess heaven as well as we.' " But we must not conclude, therefore, that Descartes condemned theology. That certain questions of theology are idle from the standpoint of our reason does not signify that theology is to be consigned to the flames. It may mean, rather, that before these mysteries of faith, once for all delivered to *us*, our reason can only bow.<sup>70</sup>

The re-examination of these matters has compelled so able a philosopher as Professor Chevalier to write of Descartes that "He is a simple soul, naïve, in the true sense of this term so French, a soul sincerely religious, even mystical." <sup>77</sup> Another recent French scholar, quoted approvingly by Gouhier, says that Descartes was "a soul more naïvely religious, more simple, less complicated, than one is generally disposed to believe." <sup>78</sup>

But this should not be understood as meaning that the philosopher anaesthetized his reason and simply swallowed whatever was labeled a truth of faith. It does not mean that reason has no relation to revelation. Indeed, he says in one reference to that question that reason may be required to judge as to what was revealed. Hobbes and Locke made that problem so much their own that I shall treat it with them, simply making mention here that Descartes was aware of this problem and that

he never proposed to attribute infallibility to everything which was asserted to have been revealed. As he put it,

Even touching the truths of faith, we ought to perceive some reason which persuades us that they have been revealed from God, before we determine ourselves to believe them; and while the ignorant do well to follow the judgment of the more capable in matters difficult to understand, it is none-the-less necessary that it be their perception which shows them they are ignorant and that those whose judgment they wish to follow are not so, otherwise they would do ill to follow them, or they would act rather as automaton or as beasts than as men.<sup>70</sup>

The new stress on the religious naïveté of Descartes may mislead the modern reader at another point. The realms of theology and scientific metaphysics were not regarded as so separate as to set up a stringent and ultimate dualism. True, Descartes refrained from supporting his scientific theories by citing scriptural texts, even when it might have been to his advantage to use them. He was probably acquainted with exegetical subtleties. He did in fact believe, whatever Pascal said, that the God of his philosophy was also the God of the Christians.<sup>80</sup> The distinction between theology and philosophy was ultimately a difference not so much in the subject matter known, as in the specific uses to which the knowledge is put. "I have no doubt," he says, "that we can veritably love God by power of our nature alone. I am not at all assured that the love would be meritorious without grace; that I leave for the theologians; but I dare say that in regard to this life it is the most ravishing and the most useful passion which we can have, and indeed that it can be the most strong."<sup>81</sup>

Descartes avoided the language of religious usage. But he might have said, without the slightest deviation from his

thought-system, that the one God, the same whether the object of philosophy or the source of revelation, gives some to be prophets and others to be teachers. He clearly thought his own call was to the method of reason; and if that did not obligate him to think nothing in religion, it did obligate him to say nothing on such matters. Why should he disregard his own obligation as a philosopher merely because other men overstepped the proprieties of their high calling? Why should the individual thinker mix reason with religion, or try to reason out some unique personal variety of faith?

But was this a practical refusal to philosophize about religion? As we have already noticed, Descartes held that in many practical matters of life a theoretical certainty is not attainable by rational effort. In such matters, however, it is not practical wisdom to leave them forever open questions. Rather, he asserts, it is practical wisdom to treat the probability, on which one at last does act, as if it were absolutely certain. That, he says, is the way of escape from the waverings and hesitating anxieties which afflict the men who are forever theorizing anew, whereas decisive action is the chief requisite of success.

The famous retort of Descartes to the zealous Dutch proselytizer needs to be examined from this standpoint. Was it a refusal to philosophize about religion, as has been charged, or was it merely an application of conclusions already reached? In matters where theoretical certainty is not available by rational effort one ought still to act with decision. Then how much more may one "march with assurance" if the guarantee of truth is revelation! It is true that he had a personal dislike of prying into other men's religion, and he no doubt wished the same privacy for himself.<sup>82</sup> But there may have been something more

then personal reticence in Descartes's reply that "The religion of my king and of my nurse is good enough for me." <sup>83</sup>

The quoted words are not actually found in the writings of Descartes or even in the Dutch book of 1661 which first printed the anecdote about the attempt of Revius to secure Descartes for Protestantism. The philosopher first politely tried to excuse himself from entering into religious dispute by saying that he was French and that he intended to guard faithfully the religion of his king. When the zealous proselytizer persisted, not comprehending how a thinker could regard this as a point of honor, Descartes then replied that he would remain faithful to the religion of his nurse. Scandalized by the utterances, Revius contemptuously remarked "What two beautiful foundations to sustain the faith of a philosopher!" And feeling the same way about the remarks, many later students have been inclined to deny their authenticity or to explain them as mere subterfuge.

Descartes certainly was familiar with the view that French gentlemen should "perform the ancient ceremonies of their country with a decent moderation." He may likewise have shared the view that "the task confronting French society before all was . . . the establishment . . . of a religious and practical unity," after the bitter strife which had so seriously endangered national unity.<sup>84</sup> It is well to remember, also, that a king of France, convert from Protestantism, had founded the Jesuit college where Descartes studied and that when this king was murdered, Descartes had been one of the students appointed to receive and bury the heart of the king.

There are still other grounds for thinking that Descartes was somewhat passionately Catholic, as he was passionate in his belief in God. "For I am in wrath," he writes, "when I see



that there are men in the world so audacious and impudent as to fight against God." <sup>85</sup> There is more which can be read into his stated intention to remain loyal to the religion of his king and of his nurse—a nurse who had been the only mother he had known and to whom he owed his life.

Assistance in understanding the famous retort of Descartes is presented by Gouhier's important work, to which repeated reference has been made. He is quite aware of the common thesis that Descartes was a physicist who instituted a science of God merely to ground a science of things. He knows that this theory has met with the approval of scholars of note, representing minds of great diversity.<sup>86</sup> Thus Gilson maintains that Descartes's sought end is exterior to his metaphysics; Maritain finds that he truly cherished only his physics;<sup>87</sup> Adam declares the defense of God is Descartes's pretext to deceive the theologians.<sup>88</sup> Many others have concluded that his religious thought could be only a secondary thing and that his philosophy, whether he wished it or not, is clearly antireligious.

Against this view Chevalier and Gouhier charge that the editor of the life of Descartes, in the standard edition of his works recently published in France, has systematically de-Christianized Descartes.<sup>89</sup> They find him simple and sincere, even naïve, in his piety. They do not find duplicity. They mention the Bible and the *Summa* which he took with him to Holland. They deny the duality which the others posed between his scientific ambition and his apologetic preoccupations. And they succeed in showing, it seems to me, how Descartes was serving the cause of God by trying to establish man as "master and possessor of nature," how the triumph of his science was at the same time an apologetic success. "Descartes believed in clear ideas and in his physics, but he believed still more in

God, in Christ, and in his church, and if he had to choose between his physics and his church, we believe that he would not at all hesitate to abandon, sincerely, the former." <sup>80</sup> "Montaigne and Descartes were attached to a religious tradition: for the first this tradition is above all a custom; for the second it is at bottom, a truth." <sup>81</sup>

But why, after this insight, does Gouhier say that Descartes's reply to the Dutch theologian was a refusal to philosophize? "The remark," he says, "certainly is not the expression of a philosophy very profound, since rightly it signifies a clear refusal to philosophize. . . . One cannot find better means of escaping an inopportune question." <sup>82</sup>

We may agree that the question might have seemed inopportune and that Descartes did not care to *talk* about religion and theology, especially with that type of individual. But does the remark justly signify that Descartes was not concerned to work out a philosophy of religion? May it not equally well signify that he had already worked out a philosophy of religion; that he had reached conclusions; and that he thought it unwise, or worse, to keep such matters open to constant rethinking? Why was it unphilosophical for him to refuse to reopen for discussion a question which reason could not decide and which, as a man of practical wisdom and true piety, he felt had been once for all decided for him by God's grace?

Santayana once wisely remarked that in the golden ages of faith religion is not so much the object of discussion as it is the trusted basis of life. May it not be that Descartes had equal insight into the role of religion in life?

We need to recall Descartes's conviction that the imperfections of great social institutions are corrected insensibly by custom, but that such institutions are better than sagacity alone

could have made them. We should remember, also, that he thought nature's laws were God's prescriptions. From these facts and from an important passage in his letter of consolation written to Huyghens<sup>98</sup> we may conclude, and I think rightly, that changing his religion would have seemed to Descartes a lack of piety. It would express an ungrateful disaffection with the way that God, in his grace, had seen fit to place him in this world.

Thus, to say that the religion of his king and of his nurse was good enough for him was, indeed, the pledging of loyalty to his king and was an expression of gratitude to the nurse who had saved his life. But no interpretation is adequate which does not take account of one thing more. The religion of his king and of his nurse was good enough for the greatest founder of modern philosophy because he thought it a true religion, given him by God.

#### 8. THE SECRET OF DESCARTES

The last word about Descartes should help to explain his saying that "one of the points of morals is to love life without fear of death" <sup>94</sup> and to understand his air of having attained something to which a life could be anchored. For it is likely that this great philosopher will always be, in the history of thought, "that French cavalier who stepped out with so good a stride." <sup>95</sup> "I always had sincere desire," he says, "to be able to distinguish the true from the false, in order that I might see clearly in my actions, and march with assurance in this life." <sup>96</sup>

That assurance often appears astounding to those of us now living in "the age of the relative," acquainted with complexities in matters which Descartes oversimplified. We are amazed that he carried into metaphysics, physics, and even into medicine the

type of certainty he first attained in mathematics, as if he really "believed he embraced the universe in one immense deduction." The explanation is that "the liberator of reason was the most devoted believer" and that in reality "the man of methodic doubt never doubted." "Descartes has of God the same knowledge which he has of a triangle, and it suffices him." <sup>97</sup>

In metaphysics, in physics, in religion, Descartes is always that young man who, one evening in November, received the visitation of the divine spirit, and from that sacred hour marches from certainty to certainty. He fears nothing; hesitates before no obstacle; his philosophy breathes the health, the good humor, the joy of work. Even in his worst audacities, even when he makes us rash promises, he has an air so natural, so assured, that it seduces the reason; it surrounds the most timid thought by dreams, and little by little gives it the impression that nothing is impossible upon this earth, where we will sometimes be "as master and possessor of nature."

Because he has seen fit to plant hope, the world has loved "this French cavalier who was off on so good a stride." But he stepped out on so good a stride because a profound faith had driven all inquietude from his soul; because he was as assured of his eternal destiny as of his victory here below. In placing the truths of religion "first in his belief," he knew that which awaited him at the end of his journey, and before a horizon without mystery it gave him the right to turn his eyes to things. His tranquil regard is then cast upon the universe, and he does not find it too great for him.

Thus Gouhier closes his great book on the religious thought of Descartes. Grateful readers will understand why the work was crowned by the French Academy and will join me in hoping that someone will give both Gouhier and Descartes to the readers of English. But only Descartes himself should close this treatment of the first great founder of modern philosophy. I bring together a number of his passages.

I think that all those to whom God has given the use of reason are obligated to employ it principally to try to know him and to know themselves. It is with this that I have tried to begin my studies. . . . It is the matter which I have studied most of all, and in which, thanks to God, I have satisfied myself not the least.<sup>98</sup>

Most men leave off with the syllables of his name, and think it is enough to know him if they know *Dieu* is intended to signify the same being as the one called *Deus* in Latin, and who is adored by men.<sup>99</sup> Those who have no higher thoughts than this can easily become atheists.

I have done . . . that to which I thought myself obligated for the glory of God, the discharge of my conscience. If my purpose does not succeed, and if there are too few people in the world capable of understanding my arguments, that is not my fault, and they are not less true on account of it: but it would have been my fault if I had not tried it.<sup>100</sup>

As I believe that it is very necessary to have well comprehended, once in one's life, the principles of metaphysics, because this is what gives to us the knowledge of God and of our own soul, I also believe that it would be very detrimental to occupy one's understanding often with meditating on them . . . but that it is better to content oneself to retain in memory and in belief the conclusions which one has once drawn concerning it; then to employ the rest of the time that one has for study to thoughts where the understanding acts with the imagination and the senses.<sup>101</sup>

The secret of the assured stride of that young cavalier the world has loved, is that once in all sincerity he had tried to doubt. The result was the birth of a philosopher who, remembering the intense joy of creative thought, became the unwavering adherent of some things that were settled once for all.

### III. Hobbes: the Great Materialist

*They would fain be absolute governors of all they converse with; and have nothing to plead for it but where they reign it is God that reigns, and nowhere else. . . . Had it not been much better that those seditious ministers, which were perhaps not a thousand, had all been killed before they preached? It had been, I confess, a great massacre; but the killing of a hundred thousand is a greater.—Hobbes, *Leviathan*.*

IT WOULD BE HARD to find another thinker of the first rank so unpopular with preachers as was Thomas Hobbes, son of a vicar of Malmesbury. The standard edition of his works, published in 1840, has been in our seminary library drawing no readers throughout many student generations; and the volume on the *Body Politic*, the best foundation for any study of his philosophy, still had most of its pages uncut after a hundred years.

Our ministerial neglect of the great materialist is probably more to our discredit than to his. For among the great philosophers none sees so clearly as Hobbes that the gravest question for the state is its relation to religion. None so ably argues that peace and prosperity depend on the form of government less than on the obedience of the subjects. He took so much the position of the Apostle Paul on many points that one may be mystified at his extreme unpopularity, especially since com-

petent authorities declare that Hobbes is "the author of a style never equalled in English for combination of lucidity, terseness and pungency."<sup>1</sup>

Further, there is much to give Hobbes high rank among thinkers, even if in justice to Comte we are compelled to refuse Hobbes the credit he claimed as the founder of sociology. A great historian calls him the founder of the most characteristic type of English philosophy. His short treatise on human nature is probably the first important presentation of the positions which have become basic to physiological psychology. Perhaps no other thinker really rivals him in the attempt to make our knowledge of natural science the foundation of all knowledge of existence. And it is doubtful if one can find a shrewder student of the Scriptures or any thinker quicker to expose a preacher for substituting doubtful contentions of current speculation for proclamation of the saving Gospel.

But his extreme unpopularity is not difficult to explain. In fact the secret has already been revealed in calling him "the great materialist" and in speaking of his profound materialistic system. Hobbes well remembered Paul's writing of a spiritual body, and he himself thought it as easy to imagine certain bodies thinking as to imagine minds thinking. But such ideas of body dropped away in the course of historic development. The views of Descartes, setting body and mind in sharpest possible opposition, became triumphant and so dominated popular thought that the average person now assumes that materialism is necessarily hostile to religious belief. Ignorant of the way history gives old words new meanings, many people are deceived by mere labels carelessly applied.

Yet ignorance alone has not led the churchmen to blacken the name of Thomas Hobbes. No great thinker was ever more

convinced that the Christian minister's high calling consists in one thing—in proclaiming Jesus as the Christ. And none is more keenly aware of the fact that varied motives may lead the minister to claim rights and powers not rightfully his. Hobbes was one of the staunchest foes who ever turned a pen against ecclesiasticism. In retaliation the clergy hurled at him the stock charge of atheism—a charge which usually greets other belief as quickly as unbelief.

But to give the clergy primary credit for quenching the light of the great materialist would exaggerate their role in the formation of public opinion. The major fact is that every position advocated by Hobbes was more than half rejected. The power of Parliament supplanted the supreme monarchy for which he argued; church leaders succeeded in retaining the political power he would have denied them; democracy, which he belittled as the government of orators, came to dominate political life; the school divinity which he scorned regained intellectual prestige; philosophy turned from materialism to stress immaterial realities; and true religion, which he thought chiefly concerned with a kingdom not of this world, became almost impatient of other-worldliness. One might almost regard Hobbes as the great philosopher of lost causes.

But this man had an unerring eye for the ultimate questions; he treats the basic problems with blunt honesty, acute energy, and clarified thought.<sup>2</sup> With Hobbes philosophy never descended to the low level of decorating technicalities; in his hands it never became the meticulous refinement of side issues.

#### I. WHAT HAS GOD SAID?

As we turn to Hobbes we are confronted by his sharp assertion that reason is incompetent to demonstrate that Christianity



is the true religion. That truth can be established only by revelation from God. Reason is unable to prove that Christianity is the needed supplement of those truths available through knowledge of nature, which Hobbes called the natural kingdom of God. For religious certainty we must proceed from the natural word of God to the prophetic word of God. But in all our investigations of the claims for supernatural revelations,

We are not to renounce our senses, and experience; nor, that which is the undoubted word of God, our natural reason. For they are the talents which he hath put into our hands to negotiate, till the coming again of our blessed saviour; and therefore not to be folded up in the napkin of an implicit faith, but employed in the purchase of justice, peace, and true religion.<sup>3</sup>

If only revelation can fully validate the Christian religion, what can validate a revelation? That is done, he replies, by prophecies and miracles. But the difficulty is that there are many false prophets; and many so-called miracles have been uncovered as selfish trickery and pious fraud. So we cannot rightly accept as being truly from God everything that is said in his name.

For *thus saith the Lord* is not the voice of God, but of the preacher or prophet. All that, and only that, is the word of God which a true prophet hath declared God to have spoken.<sup>4</sup>

If Livy say that the Gods once made a cow speak, and we believe it not, we distrust not God therein but Livy.<sup>5</sup>

God almighty can speak to a man by dreams, visions, voice and inspiration, yet he obliges no man to believe that he hath done so to him that pretends it; who, being a man, may err, and, which is more, may lie.<sup>6</sup>

How God speaks to a man immediately may be understood well enough by those to whom he hath spoken; but how the same should

be understood by another is hard if not impossible to know.<sup>7</sup> [so that] no man can be assured of the revelation of another without a revelation particularly to himself<sup>8</sup> [and] no man can infallibly know by natural reason that another has had a supernatural revelation of God's will: but only a belief. . . . It is manifest, therefore, that Christian men do not know but only believe the Scripture to be the Word of God.<sup>9</sup>

But since even the Scripture tells us that one prophet may deceive another prophet,<sup>10</sup> what certainty can we have of knowing the will of God?

It cannot be known what God's word is before we know who is the true prophet; nor can we believe God's word before we believe the prophet.<sup>11</sup>

It is true that God is the Sovereign of Sovereigns, and therefore when he speaks to any subject he ought to be obeyed, whatever any earthly potentate say to the contrary. But the question is not of obedience to God, but of *when* and *what* God hath said.<sup>12</sup>

For most thoughtful men of Hobbes's day the idea of God belonged as much to philosophy as to religion, and it was, not a belief in God, but rather a belief that God has revealed himself in some supernatural way which marked people as Christian believers. For his age, as increasingly again for our own time, revelation was the great central concept of religion as distinguished from philosophy and science. At this central point Hobbes is essentially as up-to-date as Karl Barth and Emil Brunner.

Readers acquainted with the main trends of present-day theology realize that it is no mere theoretical concept which is meant by "revelation." By belief in revelation, Hobbes would agree with the Barthians, is meant a belief that God has spoken and that we can and do know what he has said. This question

of revelation becomes then, not one of belief in God and not one of willingness to obey God, but a question of when and how God has spoken and of what he has said.

Important aspects of this crucial question will be reserved for more extended treatment in the following chapter on John Locke, where positions almost identical with those of Hobbes may be weighed without the emotional bias aroused by the extreme anticlericalism which gave Hobbes his sharp pen. But both friend and foe of current neo-orthodoxy may profit from a fresh study of the work of Hobbes. He exposes the deception practiced by ecclesiastical strategists when they try to equate opposition to their churchly claims with actual disbelief in God. And he compels us, likewise, to recognize the pious verbalism with which preachers sometimes conceal the absence of careful thinking on profound religious issues.

May we look for a moment at this question in a present setting? In a notable address an important leader of a great church is giving his advice to a group of ministers:

Leave to the men whose special field it is, the solution of the economic and industrial problems of the day . . . The laity are weary of the so-called sermons based on the noble desire for peace and justice in the industrial world. They are just as eager as you for these things, and possibly better informed. What they want you to do is to interpret the mind of God as it relates to the life of man, but the emphasis . . . must . . . be upon God and his rule.

Imagine Hobbes asking his blunt questions of this church leader. How pungently he would have exposed such verbal solutions of the greatest issues of life. How the real questions would have come pouring forth, crumpling up the wordiness! "What is your test for discerning God's rule?" "How do you detach God from these economic and industrial questions you wish the specialists alone to solve?" "By what authority do you

exclude God from an unwearying interest in peace and justice?"

Our blunt old materialist would make it embarrassingly clear that we pose a sham when we calmly assume that knowing God's will is easy, that the only difficulty is in arousing men to obey him. Hobbes well knew that no more important question ever faces men and nations than this one of testing and trying pretending prophets. How shall we know the doctrine, whether it be of God?

## 2. TESTS OF REVELATION

As we have seen, Hobbes says that only another revelation can give positive proof of a prior revelation. But there are other tests which give a valuable negative guidance. "Though God be the sovereign of all the world, we are not bound to take for his law whatsoever is propounded by every man in his name, nor anything contrary to the civil law which God hath expressly commanded us to obey." <sup>13</sup> Again, "If anything is proclaimed in the name of the Lord, and it does not come to pass, it is not of the Lord." <sup>14</sup> And sometimes a reliance on plain reasoning is inevitable. "If some man," he says, "should entertain you with sober discourse; and you desire on taking leave of him to know what he were . . . and he should tell you he were God the Father; I think you need no extravagant action for argument of his madness." <sup>15</sup>

Our senses, our experience, and our reason are not to be laid aside at the command of the church; for these God-given powers teach us convincingly that we may not wisely defer to churchly claims of being the infallible judge of pretended revelations. Nor can any better claims for church authority be made from the Scriptures. Indeed, Hobbes emphatically generalizes point blank: "There is nothing in the Scriptures from

which can be inferred the infallibility of the church; much less of any particular church; and least of all, of any particular man." <sup>16</sup>

Many episodes in history have turned on belief in revelation. Two recent decisions of the United States Supreme Court have wrestled at length with problems resulting from the belief in revelation of some of our citizens. Many students of religion hold, indeed, that such belief is the central and characteristic religious belief—that other beliefs do not serve to distinguish religion from philosophy and science. The historian may produce his evidence for asserting that belief in a God is chronologically prior to belief in revelation. And the psychologist may argue that belief in God is prerequisite for the appearance of a belief that God has spoken. But the typical religious mind may characteristically affirm that it knows that there is a God, not because of the researches of science and not because of philosophical theorizing, but solely and simply because God has revealed himself.

It need not be argued at length that this claim that a revelation has been received from God is one that raises serious problems for private life and for the responsible leaders of church and state. Acceptance of something as a revelation has been the supreme experience for many people, and their beliefs have brought results of great importance in many spheres of life. Statesmen, jurists, thinkers are all involved in problems springing from this claim to revelation; and such a claim may become almost in itself a mighty military power. When a revelation comes, or when a belief that it has come arises, no phase of life, no institution of society, no enterprise of thought can be immune to its stirring consequences. The means of testing pretended revelations is thus a truly momentous question.

Most leaders of American Christianity will not agree with Hobbes in holding that the state should be the supreme judge as to whether a so-called revelation is in fact a revelation from God. They will not like this position when it is championed by the great materialist. It will be no more acceptable when taken by the European dictators; nor will it seem to them right even if adopted by majority decisions of the United States Supreme Court. Yet Hobbes at least has the great merit of having faced unflinchingly one of life's major questions and of having faced the issue in a way to give genuine guidance rather than resort to clever compromise or retreat into pious verbalism. For no Christian, distracted and torn by conflicting loyalties, but eagerly seeking to know the will of God, was ever yet enabled to resolve a genuine question as to whether a claim upon him is a claim that God makes by being given a pious or dramatic urging to "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's."

In doing Hobbes justice we must not belittle Christ. His famous reply is not merely a clever escape from a dangerous trap. It is, indeed, a brilliant escape, but it is more than that; for the evidence is ample that Christ was not concerned to save himself. But even granting this, it is difficult to see what Professor Van Dusen can mean by calling Jesus's utterance a "simple and clear-cut principle."<sup>17</sup> But if it does not give the guidance one would expect from a principle which is in fact simple and clear-cut, it cannot easily be equated with Paul's position. For in order to be more than a mere escape, the reply of Jesus must at least imply that we cannot identify demands of a government with orders from God.

Hobbes saw that devout, believing Christians were sorely torn by conflicting loyalties to church and state. He saw that

while the utterance of Jesus serves to intensify loyalty to positions already accepted as Christian, it does not resolve the conflict which arises when the Christian citizen is subjected to contradictory demands. Further, conditions may arise in which the personal example of Jesus seems almost irrelevant, since changes in the form of government may alter the nature of a citizen's obligation. Is it not apparent that we owe to a democratic government, which weighs our wishes and depends on our decisions, a different kind of obligation than another citizen owes to an autocratic state?

Hobbes recognized that both church and state have been and that both again may be instruments of God. He knew that the same conflict arises between law and conscience, both being means through which God may manifest his will—that neither can rightly be rejected and ignored by Christian men. He saw that the great problem of society is the problem of authority; that the great problem for a Christian commonwealth and for Christian believers is that of allocating authority to determine when and what God hath spoken. In the whole history of European philosophy no other thinker has so forcefully maintained the right of the state to supremacy in religious matters. That authority, he says, may properly enough be delegated by the state to bishops, assembly, or pope. But such authority is delegated, not surrendered: it cannot be surrendered without unjustifiably compelling the Christian man to try to serve two masters.

### 3. HOBBS NOT A FORERUNNER OF FASCISM

Few men have known as well as Hobbes the long contest between the princes of church and state to exercise supreme rule over Christians. He also knew the instability of compromise

solutions and of mere verbal answers to urgent problems. He knew how experience of the early church had shown the necessity of an accepted judge of the authenticity of prophecy and how later conflicts over creeds could not be resolved until some designated living instrument became authoritative. He maintained that differences and conflicts are bound to arise; that mutual consent is not sufficient to assure concord. And the life of many ages has justified his contention, as witnessed last in the pathetic fate of the Pact of Paris renouncing war and in the tragic breakdown of the League of Nations. Hobbes was vitally interested in peace, in right, in truth, and he had a dread of war, especially of the doubled horrors of civil war. His great position in the political philosophy of England is due to the effectiveness with which he argued, on theoretical, practical, and Scriptural grounds, that these things which he wanted for himself and for the English people could best be realized if the sovereign power of the state took precedence over every instrument of the church.

Although Hobbes agrees with the contemporary fascist and communist dictators on this central issue, no greater mistake could be made than to class him with them. There is in him no trace of that exaltation of intuition at the expense of reason which now characterizes totalitarian philosophy. In one of his broadcasts to the world Herr Hitler said, "I go my way with the assurance of a somnambulist—the way which Providence has sent me."

Again, Hobbes shows nothing of mystical devotion to the state, and citizenship never becomes his religion. In his writings there are none of those attitudes and speeches which make so many of the present nationalistic ceremonies seem like the worship of a reality rated as more divine than God. And



Hobbes longs, not for war, but for peace. The safety and welfare of the people is for him the supreme law of the sovereign state. No law can be fundamental to a king but the safety and well-being of his people.<sup>18</sup> He is worlds away from Mussolini's doctrine that war brings all human energies to their maximum and that the stamp of nobility is gained through war.<sup>19</sup> Hobbes has never been equaled in his description of the state of nature as the war of each against all, with the quest of power as the motive dominating all life. There is a general inclination of all mankind, a perpetual and restless desire of power after power, that ceases only in death; nor can life itself continue without desire any more than when sense and imagination are at an end.<sup>20</sup> But this state of nature, this incessant warfare, is not desirable, and it is not ennobling. In fact, according to Hobbes the escape from this condition is the chief function of government.

#### 4. THE STATE AND MAN'S BELIEFS

It seemed to Hobbes clearly in the interests of peace that the state should govern the church or define the limits of authority which the church might wield. Both his natural philosophy and his definition of God as the cause of the world required him to believe that the political state, as truly as the church, is a creation of God. He seemed genuinely to believe that by means of secondary causes God works in us both to will and to do. But his placing the state, as an instrument of God, as supreme over the church does not for a moment mean that the Christian man was regarded by Hobbes as a mere creature of the state. The great materialist insistently reiterated the possibility of appeal against the state to God himself. He kept unflinchingly alive the dire thought of martyrdom; and many passages have the true

ring of an authentic Christianity. "Obey the state if it commands us directly to affront God, or forbid us to worship him? . . . It does not follow, neither must we obey." <sup>21</sup> For there are laws of nature to which states themselves are subject, which "cannot by any man or commonwealth be abrogated." <sup>22</sup>

To say that Hobbes put the monarch in the commonwealth in the position which religion regards God as having in the world is to slander him. Clergymen ridiculed him for his suggestive statement that Leviathan, the state, is a mortal God. But the plain fact is that Hobbes was a devout Christian, reserving worship for God alone. He proposed no worship of anything mortal. He demanded no worship of the state's sovereign power. His only demand was that it be obeyed by its citizens and obeyed "in all things which repugn not the commandments of God." <sup>23</sup>

Clergymen also tried to discredit Hobbes by presenting him as maintaining that the state could determine what is true and what is false. What he did in fact maintain was that the sovereign power, pursuant of the purpose for which it exists, has within those limits the duty and power of determining, not what is *true*, but what shall be *right*. "I never said that princes can make doctrines or prophecies true or false: but I say that every sovereign has a right to prohibit the public teaching of them, whether true or false." <sup>24</sup> "Disobedience may lawfully be punished in them that against the laws teach even true philosophy." <sup>25</sup> But he insists that they shall be silenced, if at all, by the civil power; and that whatever such power the ecclesiastics take upon themselves, "though they call it God's right, is usurpation."

But this question of legal right does not settle questions of truth, and no one has ever made that point more convincingly

than did Thomas Hobbes. "What use so-ever be made of truth, yet truth is truth, and now the question is not what is fit to be preached, but what is true." <sup>26</sup> In such matters, belief ought not to be coerced by legislation, nor can it be. "In every commonwealth they who have no supernatural revelation to the contrary ought to obey the laws of their own sovereign in the external acts and profession of religion. As for the inward *thought* and *belief* of men, which human governors can take no notice of—they are not voluntary, nor the effect of the laws, but of the unrevealed will and power of God; and consequently fall not under obligation." <sup>27</sup>

That passage makes it clear that Hobbes understood the nature of religious belief. There are others which show he sensed the importance of such belief. In fact it is just this which makes the state's relation to religion its most important problem. "Every man, if he be in his wits, will in all things yield that man an absolute obedience by virtue of whose sentence he believes himself to be either saved or damned." <sup>28</sup> But this power is not, nor can it rightly be, in the hands of the present rulers of either church or state, but only of him who knows the inmost heart.

Is there any Christian man that does not acknowledge that we are to be judged by Christ, or that we ought to obey him rather than any man that shall be his lieutenant upon earth? The question, therefore, is not of who is to be obeyed, but of what be his commands. If the Scripture contain his commands, then may every Christian know them by what they are. And what has the Bishop to do with what God says to me when I read them, more than what I have to do with what God says to him when he reads them, unless he have authority given him by him whom Christ hath constituted his lieutenant upon earth? This lieutenant upon earth, I say, is the supreme civil magistrate, to whom belongeth the care and charge of seeing that no

doctrine may be taught the people but such as may consist with the general peace of them all.<sup>29</sup>

Hobbes is driven to this position by a recognition of the importance of real belief. He sees that the very purpose of the state is threatened, that it becomes impossible that a state should stand, when any power or person within the state has power of giving greater rewards than life and of inflicting greater punishments than death, these being the commonly accepted limits of governmental power. But eternal life and eternal torment are greater, therefore no one ought to have these within the state except the sovereign power itself.<sup>30</sup> On any other basis the state is threatened, peace is endangered, and the basic purpose of society is defeated. Rather than suffer such evils, the government should prohibit the teaching of doctrines which have these dangerous political implications.<sup>31</sup>

##### 5. CHARGES AGAINST THE MINISTERS

World events today compel us to recognize that the difficulty with which Hobbes wrestled has never been adequately resolved. That this is the fact will be instantly grasped by anyone who studies the story of Martin Niemöller of Germany, who *faces with the Japanese Christians the question of reverencing the imperial shrines*, or who, at home, ponders the decision of the Supreme Court in the Macintosh case. This is one of the most urgent questions of the present world, and it needs to be enlightened from every angle. It is little short of stupid to assume that our own particular compromise is certain to endure.

In defense of an absolute monarch as over against a parliament Hobbes says that "no tyrant ever was so cruel as a popular assembly," that the "common people easily believe themselves oppressed but never oppressors."<sup>32</sup> He felt that Parliament de-

pendent too immediately on the people and tended to become a means of turning the "state and church into a popular government, where the most ignorant and boldest talkers commonly obtain the best preferments."<sup>33</sup> It seemed to him, in that disturbed period in English history, that "the people were corrupted generally, and disobedient persons esteemed the best patriots"; that "the seducers were ministers, ministers, as they called themselves, of Christ, pretending to have a right from God to govern, every one his parish, and their assembly the whole nation."<sup>34</sup>

Hobbes paid high tribute to the superb acting of the seditious Presbyterian ministers who led Britain into civil war. Their wonderful dramatic ability enabled them to destroy the peace of the kingdom, and by the assistance of ambitious ignorant orators they reduced the English government to anarchy.<sup>35</sup> Great eloquence and little wisdom produce the greatest artist in raising sedition.<sup>36</sup> And then, as usual when candidates for legislatures announce their platforms, "he was thought wisest and fittest to be chosen for Parliament . . . who most vigorously promised to keep down taxes."<sup>37</sup> To such an assembly Hobbes could not look hopefully for answer to life's most important question.

The sharpest attacks were made on those who would allow the pope supreme authority over English Christians. He says that "there was never such another cheat in the world" as the process through which the papacy subjected the governments of Christendom.<sup>38</sup> He recognizes that "there is scarce a commonwealth in the world whose beginnings can in conscience be justified," but the *supreme* example of perversion of duty is the process whereby the minister becomes the magistrate.<sup>39</sup> Rulers who permitted this development have become accessories to pub-

lic harm in allowing the growth of the pope's claims to temporal power where he does not reign. In the beginning, when this seditious doctrine might have been crushed, the rulers let the pope's power continue, "every one hoping to make use of it, when there should be cause, against his neighbor." The result was that "when the people were once possessed by those spiritual men, there was no human remedy to be applied, that any man could invent." <sup>40</sup> And he believed that England had been the "tamest nation to the pope in all the world." <sup>41</sup> The English Catholics were most trenchantly attacked, because he was convinced that they "would not be sorry for any disorders . . . that might possibly make way to the restoring of the pope's authority." <sup>42</sup>

In a brilliant historical retrospect Hobbes shows the treacheries, perjuries, and forgeries which were perpetrated by Catholics and Protestants alike. He attributes the decline of papal power to loss of faith and to the disappearance of those simple apostolic virtues which marked Christianity's rise to power. Surpassing earthly monarchs in the quest for power ill befits the self-styled vicar of Christ. In the political rivalry between pope and government the practice of auricular confession was one of the greatest instruments of ecclesiastical power: "What inconvenience it is to a state for their subjects to confess their secret thoughts to spies." <sup>43</sup>

Preaching likewise was attacked as having surrendered its divinely appointed end. He maintains that "the end which the pope had in multiplying sermons was no other but to prop and enlarge his own authority over all Christian kings and states," and that "neither the preaching of friars nor of parochial priests tended to teach men what but whom to believe." <sup>44</sup> That is, in that age-long rivalry preaching was deliberately used to align

the membership of Christian churches against the sovereign state. From history, from Scripture, and from practical reason incisive arguments are developed against the papal claims, not forgetting that the promise to Peter, on which the claims are based, was likewise made to all the rest of the apostles.<sup>45</sup>

We cannot longer follow his masterly indictment of the papacy and his description of the terrific price humanity has paid for the pope's pretense to political power. But we ought not leave it without pointing out that Hobbes himself found nothing on earth with authority to which a sovereign state could be made to conform. But he rightly saw that there is little hope of avoiding conflicts between powers without some ultimate means of coercion adequate to prevent a nation's appeal to force. He saw that the nonexistence of such a super-national power almost guarantees the outbreak of wars, and he rightly describes the conditions under which one nation is most likely to intervene in a neighbor's affairs. What he did not recognize was that uncertain extent to which the papal claims were, *not* the common attempt at self-aggrandizement, but an effort to implement the thought of a power available on earth, strong enough to make even sovereign nations bow to authority above the nations. The pathetic tragedy of history is that the attempted program caused more and fiercer wars than it was designed to avoid, since "no wars are so fiercely waged as between sects of the same religion."<sup>46</sup>

#### 6. MARTYRDOM FOR PEACE

The most frequent pretext of sedition and civil war . . . proceeded from a difficulty, not yet sufficiently resolved, the difficulty of obeying at once both God and man, then when their commandments are one contrary to the other. It is manifest enough that when a man receives two contrary commands, and knows that one of them is

God's, he ought to obey that, and not the other, though it be his lawful sovereign, or the command of his father.<sup>47</sup>

But he clearly discerns that this manifest wisdom cannot in itself determine which of two contrary commands, either or both of which may be asserted to have been issued with God's authority or under His accepted name, is in fact the true command of God.

Perhaps most of us today would maintain that in the last analysis each man must judge for himself what is the true command of God. Against that position, Hobbes has two main arguments. The first is from Scripture: for private individuals to "pursue that as good and shun that as evil, which appears to them to be so . . ." is a violation of the most ancient of all of God's commands and a yielding to the most ancient of all diabolical temptations.<sup>48</sup> But the more compelling reason is that every man's following of this procedure simply "cannot be with the safety of the commonweal."<sup>49</sup> For that is precisely the path which, followed as basic, leads back to that state of unmitigated strife for power, the escape from which is the reason for the existence of the state.

The clarity with which he sees this clash and the turmoil created by rival claims to the representation of God, affords us the means of comprehending the reality of the religious beliefs of the great materialist. Sharp and difficult as was the continued clashing, Hobbes never tried the present-day escape from the social difficulty by regarding religion itself as an opiate of the people and the very thought of God as a social misfortune. He is aware that such positions were advocated in antiquity and in his own time. It is as a genuine believer in God that the great materialist rejects all such atheistic positions. In fact, his supreme recommendation for the maintenance of peace is one



made possible only by a true and steady faith. This final solution is an ultimate renunciation of the right of revolution; he substituted therefor the martyr's obligation. "Must we resist princes when we cannot obey them? Truly, no: for this is contrary," he argues, both to our civil government which citizenship presupposes, and to express commands of Scripture not to resist the existing powers, because they are ordained of God. "What must we do then? Go to Christ by martyrdom." <sup>50</sup>

Hobbes affords us many intimate glimpses of the reasons for his strong feelings against war. He describes one man eminently combining a great array of worthy virtues who was slain in war by an undiscerning hand.<sup>51</sup> He is profoundly convinced that to seek peace is the dictate of right reason—a law of nature.<sup>52</sup> He admits that on the outbreak of the English civil war he was the first to flee to France, where he remained eleven years, "to his damage some thousands of pounds deep." <sup>53</sup> But his flight was not that of a coward. He was already fifty-two years old when Parliament and king drew swords. He was a thinker and fought, not with sword, but with pen; anyone who provoked him found his pen as sharp as theirs. As a thinker fighting for peace he set himself the task of thinking through the political organization necessary for establishing peace—"to avoid the close, dark, and dangerous by-paths of faction and sedition." <sup>54</sup> He was convinced that no human labor could profit his countrymen more. With passion matching that of prophet or apostle he tried to lead Englishmen to such reliance on reason that they would "no longer suffer ambitious men to wade to their own power through streams of English blood." <sup>55</sup> Having thus produced a social science in his passionate service for peace, Hobbes planned to return to his "interrupted speculation of bodies natural." <sup>56</sup> For of personal preference Hobbes remained to the

end a materialistic philosopher, hoping for his eternal salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

His devotion to peace prompted his extreme criticism of the clergy. For the most likely time for one nation to invade another is when the clergy is leading the people in disobedience to the state. He charges that more Christians have been burned and killed by ecclesiastical authority than by heathen emperors' laws.<sup>57</sup> With disturbing directness he flatly says, "Our late king—was murdered at the incitement of Presbyterian ministers." <sup>58</sup> "Presbyterians," he says, "are always the same; they would fain be absolute governors of all they converse with; and have nothing to plead for it but where they reign it is God that reigns, and nowhere else." <sup>59</sup> He holds their preaching directly responsible for the civil war in which he estimates that near a hundred thousand fell. "Had it not been much better that those seditious ministers, which were perhaps not a thousand, had all been killed before they preached? It had been, I confess, a great massacre; but the killing of a hundred thousand is a greater." <sup>60</sup>

#### 7. TECHNIQUE FOR GAINING POWER

By what art and skill did these preachers become strong enough to upset the government and precipitate civil war? For instruction in the endeavor to gain political power, for amassing historical knowledge, or for the pure enjoyment of great writing, the modern preacher still can profit from the explanations offered by this blunt son of the manse. It is necessary to keep in mind the recently-acquired availability of the Scriptures in the vernacular of the people. "For after the Bible was translated into English every man, nay every boy and wench that could read English thought they spoke with God almighty and understood what he said, when by a certain number of chapters

a day they had read the Scriptures once or twice over." <sup>61</sup> We must also remember the important fact that many of the nobles desired popular government in the state as strongly as these preachers desired it in the church, so that the great power the preachers acquired was not solely due to their art.

The ministerial technique had one basic method of gaining power. To accomplish their ends "these men that had the charge of souls, both by the manner and matter of their preaching, applied themselves wholly to the winning of the people to a liking of their doctrines and good opinion of their persons." <sup>62</sup>

They so framed their countenance and gesture at their entrance into the pulpit, and their pronounciation both in their prayer and sermon, and used the scripture phrase . . . as that no tragedian in the world could have acted the part of a right godly man better than these did; insomuch that a man unacquainted with such art, could never suspect any ambitious plot in them to raise sedition against the state, as they then had designed; or doubt that the vehemence of their voice (for the same words with the usual pronounciation had been of little force) and forcedness of their gesture and looks, could arise from anything else but zeal to the service of God. And by this art they came into such credit . . . as to despise all other preachers that acted not as well as they. And as for those ministers that did not usually preach, but instead of sermons . . . read to the people such homilies as the church had appointed, they esteemed and called them dumb dogs.

They never . . . or but lightly inveigh against the lucrative vices of men of trade or handicraft . . . which was a great ease to the generality of citizens and the inhabitants of the market-towns, and no little profit to themselves. . . .

They did, indeed, with great earnestness and severity, inveigh against two sins, carnal lusts and vain swearing; which, without question, was very well done. But the common people were thereby inclined to believe that nothing else was sin but that which was

forbidden in the third and seventh commandments . . . and therefore never made scruple of the acts of fraud and malice, but endeavored to keep themselves from uncleanness only, or at least from the scandal of it. And whereas they did, both in their sermons and writings, maintain and inculcate, that the very first motions of the mind, that is to say, the delight men and women took in the sight of one another's form, though they checked the proceeding thereof so that it never grew up to be a design, was nevertheless a sin, they brought young men into desperation and to think themselves damned, because they could not . . . behold a delightful object without delight.<sup>63</sup>

In another passage he observes that very few bishops can *act* a sermon so well as do the Presbyterian and Congregational preachers; and he explains why the sermons of these latter preachers are so much applauded.

First, because they do not make the people ashamed of any vice. Secondly, because they like the preacher for finding fault with the government. Thirdly, for their vehemence, which they mistake for zeal. Fourthly, for their zeal to their own ends, which they mistake for zeal to God's worship.<sup>64</sup>

But respect for the art of the Presbyterian and Independent preachers was not matched with an equal regard for their practical wisdom. "Converse with these divinity-disputers as long as you will, you will hardly find one in a hundred discreet enough to be employed in any great affair either of war or of peace."<sup>65</sup> And the controversies in which they persistently engage are never, or seldom, over points necessary for salvation; but "they are the questions of authority and power over the church, or of profit or honour to churchmen, that for the most part raise all the controversies."<sup>66</sup> Greatly influenced by Thucydides, in whom he found the faculty of writing history at its highest,<sup>67</sup> his eyes could not be blinded to the times in history

when sanhedrin and priest have enslaved a nation and justified their spoils by inspiration. He discerns the economic motivation of many activities paraded as being for the glory of God. He finds religion itself most guilty of "burning men for godliness." "Interpretation of a verse in the Hebrew, Greek, or Latin Bible is oftentimes the cause of civil war, and the deposing and assassinating of God's anointed."<sup>88</sup> All too often unsavory ethics has appeared in the highest councils of the church. He observes that "the great doctors of the church . . . thought that such frauds as tended to make the people more obedient to Christian doctrine to be pious." After making it unmistakably evident that some clerical utterances were canting and fraud, he says, "If any man will call it pious fraud, he is to prove the piety as clearly as I have explained the fraud."

#### 8. THE NEED OF PREACHING

Hobbes forces us to recognize in ecclesiastical leaders a peculiar adeptness in fraud. Reading him is a bitter tonic compelling the re-examination of our favorite assumptions. He forces us to see the difference between the safety of the church and the safety of the people. He can as easily imagine a commonwealth without a church in power as the apocalypstist can imagine heaven without an altar. He confesses that "for aught I have observed in history and other writings of the heathens, Greek and Latin . . . those heathens were not at all behind us in point of virtue and moral duties, notwithstanding that we have had much preaching, and they none at all. . ."<sup>89</sup>

Having thus reduced the professional pride of the preachers who pose as the sole agents for making this world moral, Hobbes pays his sharp compliments to those who are engaged in training preachers.

The ecclesiastics walk in obscurity of doctrine, in monasteries, churches, and church-yards. They take from young men the use of reason, by certain charms composed of metaphysics and miracles, and traditions, whereby they are good for nothing but to execute what they command them,—as fairies are said to take young children out of their cradles and to change them into natural fools.<sup>70</sup>

But lest Hobbes be radically misunderstood—and lest the young preachers hold themselves too superior to the rest of us—another statement must be given on this theme of preaching. Having pointed out these serious faults in the current preaching, he continues:

Nevertheless, I cannot think that preaching to the people the points of their duty, both to God and man, can be too frequent, so it be done by grave, discreet, and ancient men that are revered by the people; and not by light, quibbling young men, whom no congregation is so simple as to look to be taught by, or to pay them reverence, or to care what they say, except some few that may be delighted with their jingling. I wish with all my heart that there were enough . . . discreet men . . . as might suffice for all the parishes of England, and that they would undertake it.

Then, with one of his penetrating reaches to the elemental, he reduces the ministers' seditious interference with other men's business, their perversions of Scripture, and their unprofitable chewing up of religious mysteries to one great and main mistake: their assumption that the Kingdom of God, mentioned so often in the Scripture, is the present church.<sup>71</sup>

#### 9. THE FAITH OF A MATERIALIST

We need not attempt to indicate the main deficiencies in the thought of the great materialist. Indeed, the attack on Hobbes is so constant and so heated that deficiencies are commonly pointed out where they do not exist, and innumerable com-

mentators still industriously demolish his political theory by declaring that his social contract theory of the origins of the state does not accord with the facts of history. Professor Hocking has written a justified protest against the treatment this argument of Hobbes has commonly received, and his work should be consulted for a wise insistence that Hobbes was concerned with psychology and with reason, rather than with history; and that his argument is not invalidated by its lack of agreement with a chain of events.<sup>72</sup> He points out that the actual language of Hobbes excludes the supposition that he thought he was writing history and that the political theory must be considered for its presentation of the states of mind which give the state its power over men.

In accounting for the extreme unpopularity of Hobbes we had occasion in the first section of this chapter to comment on the misunderstanding of Hobbes which has inspired many of his critics. It may be in order here to insist that Hobbes is also sometimes misrepresented by his friends. It seems to me that Dean Woodbridge's admirable little article in the *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* furnishes such an instance. Religion occupies vastly more space in the writings of Hobbes, and was much more important for his thought, than one would imagine from reading the very brief final paragraph of the encyclopedic article in which the general philosophy of Hobbes is so well summarized. And while Dean Woodbridge may be right in saying that Hobbes's idea of the Kingdom of God furnishes no positive content for his philosophy, most readers of Hobbes will be deeply impressed by the ring of genuine religious conviction expressed in many of his passages.

It is therefore a grateful task to forego further adverse criticism and to bring this chapter to a close with some considera-

tion of the faith of a materialist. It is well to hail him as a great Englishman who did yeoman service in the cause of government and to proclaim him as a great apostle in the cause of peace. It is also in order to insist that the theological bickering which he scorned was to some extent an intellectual effort like in kind to that which Hobbes himself made to fix sovereignty unmistakably in some one place. Nor can there be much doubt that his sensible statement that faith and obedience save the Christian man was in principle adverse to the absoluteness which he argued for some one organ of sovereignty. The one thing of prime importance, however, is to call the attention of a world that so easily identifies materialism with atheism to the fact that the great materialist was a devout Christian.

Hobbes's faith may seem to many of us odd, contradictory, and untenable. But that it was vital to him, and dynamic and consoling, I see no way for a man to doubt. That in some higher sense it was not a saving faith, who can give authoritative testimony? Certainly innumerable passages show the quality of genuine piety, which is there when he says that the inequality between kings and their subjects is negligible when in the presence of the King of Kings;<sup>73</sup> when he recognizes the obligation of a state not to leave its poor citizens to the uncertainties of private charity;<sup>74</sup> when he insists that the honor of great persons is to be valued, if at all, by the help they give to common men.<sup>75</sup> There is the authentic note of saving faith in the fervor with which he writes:

And I profess still, that whatsoever the Church of England . . . shall forbid me to say in matter of faith, I shall abstain from saying it, excepting this point, *that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, died for my sins*. As for other doctrines, I think it unlawful, if the church define them, for any member of the church to contradict them.<sup>76</sup>



And he elsewhere says of himself: "Nor can the clamor of his adversaries make Mr. Hobbes think himself a worse Christian than the best of them." <sup>77</sup>

There is no saying of Jesus on which Hobbes depends so much as this: "My Kingdom is not of this world." He knows no rational proof that Jesus is the wisest and safest guide of life. He shows that fervid declarations of the total sufficiency of Jesus are true only if a limitation to eternal salvation is understood. For there are many things which must be learned from reasoning which are necessary if we are to live and to live well, because Christ has not delivered such instructions.<sup>78</sup> Again, in many of life's great endeavors logic is of real importance; yet "neither came Christ into the world to teach logic." "He has given no rules whereby a subject may know what is his own, and what another man's . . . Each subject must take these rules from his state," for "God the Father gave Christ not a power to judge of mine and thine, as he does to earthly rulers, nor a coercive power, nor legislative: but a showing to the world, and teaching them the way and knowledge of salvation; that is, of declaring what they are to do who would enter the Kingdom of Heaven." <sup>79</sup> It is for that purpose that Christ is totally sufficient. But that Kingdom is not of this world. It shall begin when Christ shall come in majesty and glory. "If the Kingdom of God were now already restored, why should Christ . . . come again; or why should we pray *Thy Kingdom come*." <sup>80</sup>

There is one cause, and only one, why Christ's doctrine is to be followed rather than any other. The superiority of Christ's salvation is not provable by the reason of man, or deducible from Christ's ethical perfection. Even if that were a safe foundation on which to rest our faith, it is not available. The one reason for accepting his way is that he was the Christ sent by

God.<sup>81</sup> This is the "only one article of faith necessary for salvation, that Jesus is the Christ. Truly, other doctrines, provided they have their determination from a lawful church, are not to be contradicted, for that is the sin of disobedience. But they are not needful to be believed with an inward faith." <sup>82</sup> To die for this one article of faith merits the honorable title of martyr.<sup>83</sup> In Matthew this is presented as the one article of faith; and to present this article was the reason why the Fourth Gospel was written.<sup>84</sup> And Christians ought never forget that the work of Christ, the Son of God, was not to pass new laws for other kingdoms or to establish God's vicar as competitor with earthly kings.

Divinely ordained instrumentalities are available for fulfilling the worthy functions for which the societies of this world exist. The sum of our Savior's office was to teach the way and all the means of salvation and eternal life.<sup>85</sup> It belonged to this office to forgive sins to the penitent, for that was necessary for the salvation of men who had already sinned. And it belonged to this office, also, to teach all commandments of God which cannot be understood by natural reason, but only by revelation. And "He has not promised forgiveness of all men, but of the obedient or penitent: that is, of the just; and not of all just men, but only those who believe him to be the Christ. But neither obedience alone, nor faith alone do save us, but both together." <sup>86</sup>

We are thinking much in these days about our Christian brethren in those lands where church and state are renewing the age-long battle for supremacy, where men are herded into concentration camps for exercising freedom which has its source in Christian teaching and tradition. Can we do anything better than to hope and pray that these our brethren may be both as

devoted citizens and as loyal Christians as was Thomas Hobbes: unconquerable martyrs, if need be, for an essential of faith; but never trying to deprive the state of its just prerogatives through readiness for martyrdom?

Hobbes recognized far more clearly than most men that our obligation to obey God is absolute. More acutely than most men he sensed the anguish caused among believing Christians when contradictory commandments are issued in the name of God. "When men know not whether the command be from God, or whether he that commandeth do but abuse God's name for private ends of his own," then is a faithful Christian in acute distress.<sup>87</sup> But that difficulty becomes of no real moment, according to Hobbes, to those who can clearly distinguish what is necessary from what is not necessary for reception into the Kingdom of God. "If the command of the civil sovereign be such, as that it may be obeyed without the forfeiture of life eternal; not to obey is unjust; and the precept of the apostle takes place, Servants, obey your masters in all things. . . . But if the command be such as cannot be obeyed, without being damned to eternal death; then it were madness to obey it, and the counsel of our Saviour takes place, *Fear not those that kill the body, but cannot kill the soul.*"<sup>88</sup>

## IV. Locke: the Great Empiricist

*I know not what greater pledge a man can give of the full persuasion of the truth of any thing, than his venturing his soul upon it; as he does, who sincerely embraces any religion, and receives it for true.—Locke, Letter on Toleration*

AN *Essay concerning Human Understanding* is often called the most masterly philosophical treatise in the English language. Prolix and repetitious as it often is, having been composed piecemeal through more than thirty years, it is secure in its position as a classic. In clarity, precision of language, delicacy of insight, intensity of focus, and boldness of utterance it seems to me inferior to Hume's *Treatise on Human Nature*—that most astounding production of a Scottish youth of twenty-three. But Hume's *Treatise* was a direct outgrowth of Locke's great book; and practically every later masterpiece of English philosophy has likewise resulted from some other thinker's fresh concern with Locke's immortal essay. If not the greatest, it certainly is the most influential philosophical work ever done in English. And in its own unique way it was truly great; not because it maintained a new theory of knowledge, but because of the masterly fashion in which evidence and argument were so patiently and so skillfully marshaled as to convince the world that his new theory was true.

Locke is chiefly responsible for convincing the modern world that our ideas are derived from our experience, instead of being furnished us as part of an original nature. Greatest in his role as technical philosopher, Locke was a man of diverse genius. But this theory of knowledge is the true foundation for all his other work. He boldly maintained that "most of those excellences which are looked on as natural endowments, will be found, when examined into more narrowly, to be the product of exercise, and to be raised to that pitch only by repeated actions."<sup>1</sup> It is the marvelous persistence with which he searches out and describes this formative role of personal experience that makes John Locke, for all time, the great empiricist.

Locke set himself the task of tracing the rise of ideas and images, those invisible powers that constantly govern men.

Though we may distinguish the faculties of the mind, and give the supreme command to the Will, as to an agent, yet the truth is, the man, who is the agent, determines himself to this or that voluntary action upon some precedent knowledge, or appearance of knowledge, in the Understanding . . . The Will itself, how absolute and uncontrolled soever it may be thought, never fails in its obedience to the dictates of the Understanding.<sup>2</sup>

That is, we would now say, the will is subservient to the contents of our minds. The method of formation of ideas becomes, then, the central problem for behavior, even as for thought.

Before passing to that phase of his thought which concerns us most it should be noted that Locke is frequently wronged by isolating his illustration of the new-born infant as coming into the world with its mind a blank page.<sup>3</sup> Some have taken him as meaning to say that an outer world would eventually write on that page all that the grown man would ever know. But he did not really ignore the fact that it was a human mind that

received impressions and which reflected on its own operations. He was not, as some would make him, blind to the importance of the potentialities of that mind. For example, in his treatises on government,<sup>4</sup> he says: "Thus we are born free, as we are born rational; not that we have *actually* the exercise of either; age that brings one brings with it the other also." He understood that no amount of subhuman experience would make a lower animal rational and free. It might be shown that the treatises on government, the letters on toleration, the treatise on the *Reasonableness of Christianity*, as well as his *Essay*, all sprang from the thought of what the world, with its own nature and structure, arouses in normal minds, characteristically human and, as human, distinctively rational and free. In other words, he realized, even as do our modern psychologists, that human sense is conditioned by the structure of the human organism.

#### I. LOCKE TURNS FROM THE MINISTRY

The great empiricist was a devout Christian, marked by true humility, and all his epoch-making works show signs of vital faith. It is true he was charged with being atheistic; and there is no doubt that much of later atheism did spring from seed Locke sowed. But to charge this man with atheism is merely to strip the word of meaning. The simple explanation of the charge is that he had shown the churchmen to be all too human in the great question which, in all ages, has disturbed mankind: the question as to who should have power. The charge may be abruptly dismissed as due to the duplicity or invincible ignorance of men who tried to set up their own systems on pain of fire and faggot in this world and hell fire in the next. Such men have always confused their pet doctrines with eternal verities; and rejection of some current variety of popular and

profitable Christology has often been identified with total disbelief in God.

We have no statement from Locke as to why he gave up a career in the Christian ministry; but one can hardly go astray in a guess. He joined in an ethical revolt against the fierce contests and horrid cruelties which, he said, "in our own view, have been committed under the name, and upon the account of religion," which had given "so just an offense and abhorrence to all who have any remains not only of religion, but of humanity left, that the world is ashamed to own it." <sup>5</sup> And those fierce contests, "those endless and unreasonable contentions about fundamentals," were mostly absurd, the attacks being led by men unable or unwilling even to try to state precisely what one must believe and do in order to escape the damnation which threatens the natural man. Church leaders were openly saying it could not be known from the Gospel alone what must be believed for salvation: a statement which seemed to Locke as bad a charge against Christianity as any of its greatest enemies can make. <sup>6</sup>

He says that theology is a science which would truly enlarge men's minds were it studied with that freedom, love of truth, and charity which it teaches. But it had become perverted and "made, contrary to its nature, the occasion of strife, faction, malignity, and narrow impositions." <sup>7</sup> In the interests of the established national church, or, otherwise put, to further their own prestige and power, ministers were saying that dissenters might at least openly profess that they believed the required articles; a suggestion which moved Locke to reply: "A sweet religion indeed, that obliges men to dissemble, and tells lies both to God and man for the salvation of their souls." <sup>8</sup>

According to Locke, "The cause of God requires nothing but

what may be spoken out plainly, in a clear, determined sense, without any reserve or cover."<sup>9</sup> He suspected, "as comporting neither with the truth of religion, nor the design of the gospel, anything which was suited only to some one country or party."<sup>10</sup> Many a preacher, "muffled up in the zeal and infallibility of his own sect . . . would not touch a book or enter into debate with a person that would question any of the things which to him are sacred."<sup>11</sup> And it almost seemed to Locke, a Christian who truly believed with his own mind, that none but practical atheists would have found it possible to change their articles of faith and their forms of worship so freely as had the English ecclesiastics when the English sovereigns changed their religious positions.<sup>12</sup> Much that was said by such churchmen seemed to any plain-spoken philosopher a mere "bawling for fashionable and profitable orthodoxy."<sup>13</sup> And they clearly maintained for England a theory of church and state which they would oppose for Italy, France, or Spain.

But however sharp his thrusts at avaricious churchmen, Locke can never be rightly understood except as the student whose desire to serve led him to forsake the ministry for medicine, to give up medicine for philosophy, and then to subordinate every other activity to that pursuit of truth which seemed to him the highest activity the Creator has made possible to man. In a letter to an intimate friend he interprets his whole career: "I think everyone, according to what way Providence has placed him in, is bound to labor for the public good as far as he is able, or else he has no right to eat."<sup>14</sup> Nor did he have grandiose notions of his greatness. "It is ambition enough," he wrote, "to be employed as an under-labourer in clearing the ground a little, and removing some of the rubbish that lies in the way of knowledge."<sup>15</sup> But humble as he was, he



knew that there is in man something greater than what is in the world: "The Creator had not been content to make men two-legged, and leave it to Aristotle to make them rational." "Men would be intolerable to themselves and contemptible to others if they should embrace opinions without any ground, and hold what they can give no manner of reason for." <sup>16</sup> He was never "content to live lazily on scraps of begged opinions"; <sup>17</sup> he was certain that the understanding is man's "most elevated faculty" and that "it is employed with a greater and more constant delight than any other." He insisted that "he that examines and, upon a fair examination, embraces an error for a truth, has done his duty more than he who embraces the profession of the truth without having examined whether it be truth or no." <sup>18</sup> After reading all his works we cannot feel there is any trace of boasting when he says of himself: "I shall always have the satisfaction to have aimed at truth and usefulness. . . . For it is truth alone I seek, and that will always be welcome to me, when or from whencesoever it comes." <sup>19</sup>

Locke is foremost of that great line of thinkers, the pride of British philosophy, who have lent their talents to the public service. But whether he was writing the great protest against the proposed debasing of the currency, the plea for lowering the rate of interest, the treatises on government, the letters on toleration, his thoughts concerning education, still the dominating motive never varied. His sense of calling was especially strong to aid those who desired not only to be right but also to know why they believed. And follow as we may through those now tedious controversies into which he was dragged, we find no reason for discounting his statement: "It is of greater consideration with me, to give any light and satisfaction to one single person, who is really concerned to understand, and be

convinced of the religion he professes, than what a thousand . . . fashionable professors of any sort of orthodoxy shall say or think of me." <sup>20</sup> "I satisfy myself with this assurance, that if there was anything in my book against what any one called religion, it was not against the religion contained in the gospel." <sup>21</sup>

Such was the inmost mind of the great empiricist whose writings became Bible for two centuries of revolutions; who dealt the death-blow to scholastic authority in philosophy; whose treatises on government ended the era of belief in some "divine right to govern wrong"; <sup>22</sup> who unanswerably asserted the rights of the people to govern themselves for their common benefit; whose *Letter on Toleration* was called "a better encyclical than has been issued by any of the successors of Peter." <sup>23</sup>

## 2. THE PHILOSOPHER OF FREEDOM

For Locke government can be nothing but a trustee for the people. It is people, not governments, who are endowed by their Creator with inalienable rights; and "when estates, and liberties are in danger, and perhaps religion, too, each citizen retains a right of resistance which cannot rightly be called rebellion." <sup>24</sup> He thought an absolute monarchy inconsistent with civil society, and no form of government at all.

For his discerning insights into the place of property in the rise of government Locke could be called the prophet of property. To preserve his property is man's right and privilege by the law of nature; to ensure the better preservation of it is the motive and origin of civil society. And property includes lives, liberties, estates. "The supreme power of a Commonwealth cannot take a penny from a man without his consent, and violation

of this property right is a breach of trust, justifying the institution of a new government." <sup>25</sup> Here is the thinking behind the American Revolution; "Taxation without representation is tyranny" is Locke in a nutshell. And it was his knowledge of men's ambitions and frailties which led him to advocate that separation of the legislative, judicial, and administrative functions of government which still remains our political gospel.

Locke stood for the freedom of the individual in all the phases of human experience. No one ever felt more strongly that "slavery is a vile and miserable estate of mankind." <sup>26</sup> Perhaps he even exaggerates the individual's claims. Each of his great works may be interpreted as a defense of individual liberty: political liberty in *Two Treatises of Government*; religious liberty in the *Letter on Toleration*; intellectual liberty in *An Essay concerning Human Understanding*. But his pleas for liberty are not the sentiments of a popular orator. "He never seeks to kindle our passions, to enlist our sympathies on his side; but proceeding steadfastly in what appeared to him to be the wake of truth, he leaves it to our own good sense to determine whether we will go along with him." <sup>27</sup> His only appeal is to a deep something in the nature of things, which he is confident man's reason may grasp. One may find superb examples of this procedure in all his works. "Law," he says, "in its true notion, is not so much the limitation as the direction of a free and intelligent agent, to his proper interest," and it is valid "no farther than is for the general good of those under that law: could they be happier without it, the law, as a useless thing, would of itself vanish. . . . So that, however mistaken it may be, the end of law is not to abolish or restrain, but to preserve and enlarge freedom. . . . Where there is no law there is no freedom." <sup>28</sup>

Foremost exponent of the balance theory in the functions of government, he nevertheless attributes supremacy to the legislature.

The legislative is not only the supreme power of the Commonwealth, but [is] sacred and unalterable in the hands where the community has once placed it; nor can any edict of anybody else, in what form soever conceived, or by what power soever backed, have the force and obligation of a law.

But this supreme power itself is sharply limited by the laws of nature and by the basic purposes for which government exists. We must hold no theory of government which implies "that men are so foolish that they take care to avoid what mischiefs may be done them by pole-cats or foxes, but are content, nay think it safety, to be devoured by lions."<sup>20</sup> Not even a duly elected legislature "can possibly be absolutely arbitrary over the life and fortunes of the people. . . . It is a power that has no other end but preservation, and therefore can never have a right to destroy, enslave, or designedly to impoverish the subjects."<sup>20</sup> And wherever an established government betrays the people's rights, there remains an inalienable right of revolution. We must constantly remember that mild protest and humble submission are never likely to disarm a power guilty of unjust use of force. There is a price which people must pay for freedom. "In all states and conditions, the true remedy of force without authority, is to oppose force to it."<sup>21</sup>

### 3. A PECULIAR DEFECT IN LOCKE

So deeply has Locke influenced our modern thought, so approvingly do our minds follow as he expounds his doctrine of political freedom or of religious toleration and his acute tracing of the means whereby property rights are acquired, that one

seems to be reading a masterly contemporary document—except for the way the s's are printed. Then, with a sharp sense of surprised impossibility, one comes across a dating passage; as when, for example, our author raises the question as to "whether, in the wild woods and uncultivated waste of America, left to nature, a thousand acres yield the needy and wretched inhabitants as many conveniences of life as ten acres of equally fertile land do in Devonshire." <sup>32</sup>

But we have no call to develop Locke's political theories. In leaving that phase of his thought I wish to comment, however, upon a certain unfortunate offshoot of his thinking, because both in religious and political affairs we Americans are still suffering consequences of his unsound doctrine. I refer to the way in which his stressing of man's natural ability, his confidence in the light of nature, his English trust in the plain man, all conspired to minimize the significance of history. It seems somewhat strange that the great empiricist failed so signally to appreciate history as the recorded experience of others, and that institutions are in a genuine way means of organizing and perpetuating experience, and that institutions become, as it were, veritable parts of that world structure which arouses the experience of succeeding generations. But it was another hundred years in Britain before history began to have justice done her, at the hands of the greatest of the philosophical sceptics—that keen, incisive, witty, and brilliant Scot, who, although he wrote the most wonderful of our philosophical classics, ever preferred to be known as "David Hume, the Historian."

#### 4. BELIEF AND CHRISTIAN UNION

Locke's famous *Letter on Toleration*, composed while the anonymous author was a refugee in Holland, sets up clear

limits for the functions of civil government and of the Christian church. Governmental authority is in outward force; it has right only to exact a citizen's obedience, never to invade a man's belief. The state cannot have care of the salvation of men's souls. Necessary as it is for human welfare, the state is of necessity unalterably secular. Religion is essentially an inward faith, which can never really be conformed to the dictates of any other, whether of church or of state. For from its very nature inward belief is not subject to any man's orders, not even to one's own desires. It springs from those ideas which are impressed on a man's understanding by that surrounding reality which is, ultimately, a revelation of God's glory and a manifestation of his handiwork. It is to this inward faith that the Christian man should be true; and men are made enough alike, and nature speaks with such steadfast truth, that men, left free, will agree enough on central things. In such matters the civil government's authority is quite irrelevant. He says it ill befits the Deity that man should owe salvation to the place of his birth, as would be the case were one's belief made dependent on a sovereign's stand: "How preposterous, in wholesale fashion, to deny salvation to the Chinese because they were not born in Spain."

In his time there was much sincere talk about the union of all Christians. But various sections of the church were constantly seeking ways to advance their own prestige and power through securing some kind of assistance from the state. For the same reason they tried to deny to others the advantages of the Christian religion. It was in such a situation, when the clash of these interests had already produced bloody wars, that Locke's appeal for toleration was made. The basic point is this: that "no man has, or can have authority, to shut any one out

of the church of Christ, for that for which Christ himself will not shut him out of heaven." <sup>33</sup> He notes how easily "the pretence of religion and the care of souls, serves for a cloak to covetousness, rapine, and ambition," <sup>34</sup> and he exposes the ways in which the heads and leaders of the church are moved by avarice. And he was clear, in his own sound mind, that reason joined with revelation in supporting a contention which might well appear on the agenda wherever men of the Christian church meet to talk of union.

This, probably, would contribute more to the conversion of the Jews, Mahometans, and Pagans, if there were proposed to them and others, for their admission into the church, only the plain and simple truths of the gospel necessary to salvation, than all the fruitless pudder and talk about uniting Christians . . . <sup>35</sup>

No one can outdo Locke in declaring that "obedience is due in the first place to God, and afterward to the laws." <sup>36</sup> "There is nothing in this world that is of any consideration in comparison with eternity. . . . But the care of each man's salvation belongs only to himself. . . . Any one may employ as many exhortations and arguments as he pleases." Indeed, as an earnest Christian he should feel like trying to promote the salvation of other men. But all force and compulsion are to be forborne. Even God himself does not use force. But men replied that by the law of Moses idolaters were to be rooted out. "True, indeed," he replies, "by the law of Moses: but that is not obligatory to us Christians." <sup>37</sup>

It cannot be shown, he says, that "God has ever given any such authority to one man over another as to compel any one to his religion." <sup>38</sup> For if the civil government has such authority in one place, it has in every place, for civil government has

but one foundation, and its function is everywhere the same. So the attempt to use force to coerce men in religion would as much promote popery in France as Protestantism in England; and the papist would be punished in England, but the Protestant in Italy.<sup>80</sup> Neither as a loyal citizen nor as a faithful Christian could Locke believe that God was so mixed in his purposes. Interests other than men's salvation were intruded into the religious discussions. Locke is thus driven to conclude that toleration must be the mark of the true church;<sup>40</sup> for its task is to promote saving faith in Christ; and since all the life and power of true religion consists in the inward and full persuasion of the mind, faith is not faith without that true believing which it is impossible to achieve on orders.

His arguments were met by the insistence that the true church is not a voluntary society; that none is a true church unless it have a bishop with ruling authority directly derived from the very apostles. That seemed to Locke, as it did to Hobbes, one form of the natural man's grasp for power and a weakening of faith in the reality of the Kingdom not of this world. Furthermore, the claim would compel us to believe that God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit are thoroughly incompetent as lawgivers. For when it is asserted that there is no valid church without a bishop, Locke replies: "Let them show me the edict by which Christ has imposed that law upon his church, and let not any man think me impertinent if, in a thing of such consequence, I require that the terms of this edict be very express and positive."<sup>41</sup> Can we believe that Christ ever intended that and failed to make it clearer than in the passages from which the bishops derive their claim? Is it not vastly clearer that Christ promised that where two or three are gathered together, be-



lievingly, there he himself will be? And is not the Christian faith at bottom a confidence that where Christ is, nothing is wanting to the salvation of souls? <sup>42</sup>

#### 5. DANGER OF THE SOCIAL GOSPEL

It is true that state and church alike are concerned with the good life; moral actions belong to the jurisdiction of both.<sup>43</sup> Locke clearly grasped the danger at this point: "Here, therefore, there is great danger lest one of these jurisdictions encroach upon the other, and discord arise between the keeper of the public peace, and the overseer of souls." He saw that this is the point at which there is greatest likelihood of upsetting that mutual respect which seemed to him the foundation for religious toleration. But he saw, likewise, that the danger is one that can never be permanently removed so long as church and state are both vital institutions, each faithful to an appointed task. As we consider this difficult problem, we must be clear about basic things. The state exists to preserve life and property; its greatest function is security. By its very essence it has a social function; that is, its very function governs relations between men. On the other hand, the only bond uniting man to the church is what "proceeds from expectation of life eternal." <sup>44</sup>

From the nature of the case there is a certain inconclusiveness about the things of faith which irks some men. Locke sees that "knowledge, properly so-called, is not to be had of the truths necessary to salvation." <sup>45</sup> No ruler can demonstrate the truth of the articles of his church or the fundamental truths of the Christian religion. And "whatever is not capable of demonstration is not, unless it be self-evident, capable to produce knowledge . . . faith it is still, and not knowledge; persuasion and not

certainty." There is of consequent necessity a risk that cannot be escaped. The risks of a state are socially distributed: but this final risk of religion is one that each must take for himself. In the final choice none can bear another's burden; because a real belief is a man's own response to something presented to his own mind. "I know not," he writes, "what greater pledge a man can give of the full persuasion of the truth of any thing, than his venturing his soul upon it; as he does, who sincerely embraces any religion, and receives it for true."

One only needs to know the importance of belief in religion and the nature of belief to conclude that the state's outward force is irrelevant. A proposition may be handed me by another. It may be a statement that the other man believes; but no activity of that other's mind can make it my belief. It can become my belief only as my mind is active upon it; and the attempted use of compulsion may make it more difficult rather than easier for me to believe. But even when I do believe, it can serve no useful purpose to insist that his belief and my belief add up to knowledge. Together we know that we believe; that is easily twisted into a statement that we believe we know, and some of us, with a burst of wordy piety, will add another belief and another and then maintain we know we know. By such processes men, discontent with the basic set-up in the religious position of man, try to escape the final risk of religion and turn their efforts to worthy activities where more realistic goods are gained and where verified knowledge is possible.

Every move on the part of churchmen, as such, to invade the sphere of the state would seem to Locke to endanger that separation of church and state which is the foundation for religious toleration. He sees the constant danger that the effort to make religion practical may make it more difficult to keep

religion free. Locke would recognize, for what it is, every statement of the Christian task as being the improvement of the earthly lot of man. True, for some people such a conception enhances the importance of the church; but it heads the church into concern with matters where there is greatest likelihood of its interfering with the state's discharge of the function conferred upon it by the whole people. But, far more importantly, there is a way in which this program is an essential weakening of that faith known to history as the Christian religion, which was centrally concerned, not with length of days, but with eternal life; not with purity in politics, but with the soul's salvation. And every penetrating observer having much concern with present problems, however religious phraseology may clothe the discussion, knows that lesser things are often stressed because in them there is a possibility of knowing; because in them assured and tangible results are often visible; because in them it does not seem so necessary that men must walk by faith.

Please do not mistake me; and do not grossly misjudge the great empiricist. As a citizen of England, John Locke did more than any other Englishman to win freedom for the press. True, he never rose to Miltonic heights in praise of liberty; but his marshaling of simple reasons for liberty gained an immediate response denied to Milton's grander plea. Again, few men in England have so profoundly influenced the theory of education. More than any other he secured the actual acceptance of toleration as the ideal of thoughtful Englishmen. In innumerable other ways he served his age with signal merit. It is a hopeless task to seek a thinker of the British race who more effectively applied clear thinking to our social enterprises. But there would have been no time in his mature life when England's greatest philosopher would not have thought of these as lesser things:

he would never for an instant have thought of himself as a Christian because of them or have done them because he was a Christian. Please remember that he did them. But had such tasks become at any time his supreme concern, he would have been honest enough to recognize that he had lost his Christian faith. As a Christian he believed and said that "there is nothing in this world that is of any consideration in comparison with eternity."<sup>48</sup> He had no access to those modes of modern logic which persuade some of us that time and eternity are identical. With the great philosopher, empiricist in religion as in philosophy, the Christian faith is faith; it is set on eternity, and where the sense of that is lost, no amount of zeal, even for today's high tasks, could blind the candid thinker to the major fact that Christian faith has withered away.

#### 6. THE REASONABLENESS OF CHRISTIANITY

We turn more directly to Locke's major message to anyone who concerns himself with what it means to be a Christian. Certainly what we have considered has not been irrelevant. But Locke has much to offer on another problem proving troublesome to contemporary thinkers.

It is a commonplace that there is at present an urgently felt need of a doctrine of revelation. That needed doctrine of revelation cannot be culled from Locke's pages. But nowhere in English print can one find another treatment of reason and revelation comparable with that given in the little volume *The Reasonableness of Christianity as Delivered in the Scriptures* and in three chapters of the last book of the great *Essay*. In some detail and with much quoting of Locke himself we shall first give the occasion of his famous defense of Scriptural Christianity; then we shall give successively his idea as to what reason can

prove in religious matters, why in spite of all that reason could do there still remained a need of revelation, how a revelation may be known to be such, and what that Christian religion, delivered in the Scriptures, holds to be necessary to salvation.

There is abundant evidence that Locke was a life-long diligent and devout student of the Bible. The "Commonplace Books" put that past question.<sup>47</sup> We are informed by one present at the youthful discussion out of which the great *Essay* grew that the subject of the talk of friends was the principles of morals and revealed religion. But Locke tells us directly that his book on the *Reasonableness of Christianity* was prompted by the current discussion of religion; because he recognized his own need of making "a stricter and more thorough enquiry into the question about justification."<sup>48</sup> He says that "Every one has a concern in a future life, which he is bound to look after. This engages his thoughts in religion, and here it mightily lies upon him to understand and reason well."<sup>49</sup>

With painful knowledge of the wars of religion and acquainted as he was with the divergent sects, it would have seemed to Locke a waste of time to consult with the bishops or to trust the creeds. He could but wonder at the extravagant arrogance of some theologians, who were so confident that they could explain the things necessary for salvation better than could the Eternal and Infinite Wisdom of God.<sup>50</sup> But it was his whole philosophical position which impelled him to go direct to the Scriptures. His empirical philosophy held that ideas arise from experience; that they are best understood by re-examination, if possible, of the experience which aroused them. He was thus driven to the Scriptures for the most authoritative information about the rise of Christianity and for knowl-

edge of the requirements for that eternal life about which every man should be concerned.

So to the Scriptures he turned, with life's most important question in mind. And he tells us how, while that diligent search went on, another person daily asked of him what thing of importance he had learned from the Scriptures that day. Here is one statement of what he found:

The perfection, the fulness, the comprehension of the Holy Scriptures, is truly astonishing. The knowledge most mysterious and profound is there exhibited . . . the truths most useful and necessary are there unfolded . . . the precepts most pure and effective of mankind are there recommended. . . . The great sectaries of nature, in their four thousand years improvement, gave us little besides blunders and blotted paper.<sup>61</sup>

This comparison between biblical teachings and the philosophies will be developed in another connection.

His estimate of what he found in the Scriptures can be appreciated only as we have in mind his own opinion as to man's capacity for knowledge. Here the fourth book of the *Essay* is indispensable. According to that classic account, we have the knowledge of our own existence by intuition, by an infallible perception that we are. God has given us no innate ideas of Himself, nor has he directly stamped any characters on our minds wherein we may read his being. As we would now say, God is not an object of direct perception. But we may have a knowledge of the existence of God by demonstration—by a demonstration which Locke holds equal to mathematical certainty. Knowledge of other things we have by sensation.

It seemed to Locke "as certain and clear a truth as can anywhere be delivered, that the invisible things of God are clearly

seen from the creation of the world, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead." The steps to justify so strong a statement are clearly set out in that famous tenth chapter, and there is much of present worth in the arguments by which he establishes as thoroughly true propositions that God is eternal, that He is wise, and that He is not material. And by the operations of reason alone, he holds, another important truth is made clear and certain for every man who will take the pains to employ his faculties: "He that hath the idea of an intelligent, but frail and weak being, made by and depending on another, who is eternal, omnipotent, perfectly wise and good, will as certainly know that man is to honour, fear, and obey God, as that the sun shines when he sees it."<sup>52</sup> And that reason discovers to men that a good life is the most acceptable thing to Deity; the common light of nature puts this past doubt.<sup>53</sup>

But no one could more clearly recognize that there are limits to our powers of reason. In his comment on Malebranche he says, "God is not bound in all he does to subject his ways of operation to the scrutiny of our thoughts, and confine himself to do nothing but what we must comprehend."<sup>54</sup> Here is, in reason, a basis for revelation; which is some extraordinary way in which God discloses truths to men. And much of the time there is a practical need of revelation simply because of the failure of men, not because of the failure of reason. For often enough "we are all short-sighted . . . and see but one side of a matter; our views are not extended to all that has a connection with it. . . . It is no wonder we conclude not right from our partial views."<sup>55</sup> Worse than that, men are likely to think that there is "no truth but in the sciences they study, or the book that they read." "This prejudging of other men's

notions, before we have looked into them, is not to show their darkness, but to put out our own eyes." Because of these failures of men, endowed by reason, to make full use of their faculties it may happen that truths discoverable by reason are actually first disclosed by revelation.

#### 7. WHY WAS REVELATION NEEDED?

By insisting upon the possibility that man may be saved by right following of the light he has, Locke made it appear to many of his contemporaries that revelation is needless; he seemed to intimate that the coming of Christ had been unnecessary for salvation. As to the logical possibility even of those strong statements, he did, indeed, vigorously insist. But by appealing to the facts of man's actual experience; that is, by relying upon his own empirical principles, he finds, not a logical necessity, but a practical need of revelation. And in his pages we may find reply to the argument that Christ was not needed because all the principles of true morality were obtainable before his coming.

As you will have foreseen, his argument turns on the difference between possibility and actuality; between the abstract obtainability of these saving moral principles and the actuality of men's obtaining them. In the first place, he denies that all Christ's principles were already available when He came. But, more importantly, they were not available together; "and convenience, too, is a law of nature." Further, in each of the moral teachers in whom some of Christ's great precepts might have been found, there was much else besides these principles; and although this other was far less valuable and often not truly worthy at all, it was backed by the same authority as the good. And even if all the elements of Christ's high moral code



obtainable, no one had actually succeeded in making such a comprehensive moral code authoritative; so even the true principles actually known lacked the human helpfulness Christ gave them. But no digest of this great argument can do it justice. With some incidental omission and with some slight transposition, I quote at length.

Why was Christ needed?

Because men were in the hands of priests, who filled their heads with false notions of the Deity, and their worship with foolish rites; and what dread or craft once began, devotion soon made sacred, and religion made immutable. In this state of darkness and ignorance of the true God, vice and superstition held the world. Nor could any help be had or hoped for from reason; which could not be heard, and was judged to have nothing to do in the case; the priests everywhere, to secure their empire, having excluded the Reason from having anything to do in religion.

Philosophy seemed to have spent its strength, and done its utmost, or if it should have gone further . . . and from undeniable principles [had] given us Ethics in a science like Mathematics . . . this yet would not have been so effectual to man in this imperfect state, nor proper for the cure. . . . You may as soon hope to have all the day labourers and tradesmen, the spinsters and dairy-maids, perfect mathematicians as to have them perfect in ethics this way. . . . The greatest part cannot know, and therefore they must believe. . . . And were all the duties of human life clearly demonstrated; yet I conclude, when well considered, that method of teaching men their duties would be thought proper only for a few, who had much leisure, improved understandings, and were used to abstract reasonings. But the instruction of the people were best still to be left to the precepts and principles of the gospel . . . [For] to one who is once persuaded that Jesus Christ was sent by God to be a King, and Saviour of those who do believe in him, all his commands become principles; [they] need no other proof for the truth of what he says, but that he said it.

So you ask why Christ was needed? Because few people resorted to the philosophic schools to learn virtue and most people were under the grip of unworthy religion.

Lustrations and processions were much easier than a clean conscience and a steady course of virtue; and an expiatory sacrifice, that atoned for want of it, was more convenient than a strict and holy life. No wonder, then, that religion was everywhere distinguished from and preferred to virtue. . . . Natural religion in full extent was not taken care of. 'Tis too hard a task for unassisted reason to establish morality in all its parts. . . . And 'tis at least a surer and shorter way, to the apprehensions of the vulgar and mass of mankind, that one manifestly sent from God, and coming with visible authority from him, should as King and law-maker, tell them their duties. . . . Experience shows that the knowledge of morality, by mere natural light . . . makes but a slow progress, and little advance in the world. . . . 'Tis plain in fact that human reason, unassisted, failed men in its great and proper business of morality.<sup>56</sup>

When truths are once known to us . . . we are apt to ascribe to our own understanding the discovery of what, in reality, we borrowed from others; or, finding we can prove, what at first we learned from others, we . . . conclude it an obvious truth, which, if we had sought, we could not have missed. Nothing seems hard to our understandings that is once known; and because what we see, we see with our own eyes, we are apt to overlook . . . the help we had from others. . . . Thus the whole stock of human knowledge is claimed by everyone as his private possession, as soon as he has got it into his own mind. . . . He studies, 'tis true . . . but their pains were of another sort, who first brought truths to light. He that travels the roads now . . . little considers how much he owes to their pains who cleared the woods, drained the bogs, built the bridges, and made the ways passable. A great many things which we have been bred up in the belief of, from our cradles, we take for unquestionable obvious truths, and easily demonstrable; without considering how long we might have been in doubt or ignorance had revelation been silent. And many are beholden to revelation who do not ac-

knowledge it. 'Tis no diminishing to revelation, that reason gives its suffrage, too, to the truths revelation has discovered.

#### 8. HOW CAN WE KNOW A REVELATION?

How may a revelation be known as such? We must first recognize the folly of trying to bind God to our reason's rules. Though Locke was a great champion of democratic principles, he nevertheless observes: "However *vox populi, vox dei* has prevailed as a maxim, yet I do not remember where God ever delivered his oracles by the multitude."<sup>57</sup> He somewhat too easily takes the reported performance of biblical miracles as a guarantee of the truth of the teachings they support. We search Locke in vain for any real investigation of the grounds for believing that the Scriptures are the word of God. At this crucial point he brought to bear nothing of that persistently exploring spirit which characterized his general investigation of the origin of ideas. In his *Selections from Locke* Sterling Lamprecht justly says that Locke shows a compromising spirit in commenting on the critical views of Scripture advanced by Spinoza, work as epoch making, in its own way, as the most original work of Locke himself. It is probably both just and charitable for him to add, however, that Locke took this position through conviction that all extremes were to be avoided in the effort to have broad grounds on which all reasonable Christians could unite.

How may a revelation be known as such? First, a revelation that God has directly given another can be for us only what we may call a traditional revelation. Revelation of this kind can give us no new simple ideas; and though it may in fact first enable us to know propositions knowable by reason, knowledge from this kind of revelation cannot have the same certainty which our natural faculties may give, if the same truths are

gained by that means. Even a direct revelation can give no greater certainty than our knowledge can give; for we must receive revelation by use of our faculties, and no use of our faculties can exceed the certainty of our intuitive knowledge, that is, our clear and distinct knowledge, such as that we exist or that the sun shines when we see it.

Therefore no proposition can be received for divine revelation, or obtain the assent due for all such, if it be contradictory to our clear intuitive knowledge. Because this would be to subvert the principles and foundations of all knowledge, evidence, and assent whatsoever . . . if doubtful propositions shall take place before those selfevident, and what we certainly know give way to what we may possibly be mistaken in. In propositions, therefore, contrary to . . . clear perception . . . it will be . . . vain to urge them as matters of faith; they cannot move our assent under that or any other title whatsoever.<sup>58</sup>

But important as is that assertion made by Locke, the reasons given are far more important. Why is it, we ask, that faith cannot convince us of anything that contradicts our knowledge?

Because [Locke replies] though faith be founded on the testimony of God (who cannot lie) revealing any proposition to us; yet we cannot have an assurance of the truth of its being a divine revelation greater than our knowledge; since the whole strength of the certainty depends upon our knowledge that God revealed it. . . . This case, wherein the proposition supposed revealed contradicts our knowledge or reason, will always have this objection hanging over it: we cannot tell how to conceive *that* to come from God . . . which, if received for true, must overturn all the principles and foundations of knowledge he has given us; render all our faculties useless; wholly destroy the most excellent part of his workmanship, our understandings. . . . Whatever God hath revealed is certainly true: no doubt can be made of it. . . . Whatever is divine revelation, ought to overrule all our opinions, prejudices and interest, and hath a right to be received with full assent. Such a submission as this,

of reason to faith, takes not away the landmarks of knowledge: this shakes not the foundations of reason, but leaves us that use of our faculties for which they were given us. . . . But whether it be a divine revelation or no, reason must judge. . . . To this crying up of faith in opposition to reason, we may . . . ascribe those absurdities that fill almost all the religions which possess and divide mankind. . . . I believe because it is impossible, might, in a good man, pass for a sally of zeal; but would prove a very ill rule for men to choose their opinions or religion by.<sup>59</sup>

Reason is natural revelation, whereby the eternal Father of light and fountain of all knowledge, communicates to mankind that portion of truth which he has laid within reach of their natural faculties; revelation is natural reason enlarged by a new set of discoveries communicated by God immediately, which reason vouches the truth of, by the testimony and proofs it gives that they come from God. So that he that takes away reason to make way for revelation puts out the light of both . . . as if . . . a man . . . put out his eyes, the better to receive the remote light of an invisible star by a telescope.<sup>60</sup>

There is "a false principle of reasoning often made use of," remarkably described by Locke. It is what was then called Enthusiasm,

which, though founded neither on reason nor divine revelation . . . works more powerfully on the persuasions and actions of men than either of these two, or both together; men being most . . . obedient to the impulses they derive from themselves . . . For strong conceit . . . freed from all restraint of reason and check of reflection . . . is heightened into a divine authority, in concurrence with our own temper and inclination. . . . Immediate revelation being a much easier way for men to establish their opinions and regulate their conduct, than the tedious and not always successful labour of strict reasoning, it is no wonder that some have been very apt to pretend to revelation, and to persuade themselves that they are under the peculiar guidance of heaven, especially in their actions and opinions . . . which they cannot account for by the ordinary methods of knowledge and principles of reason.<sup>61</sup>

This is the way of talking of these men: they are sure because they are sure; and their persuasions are right, because they are strong in them.<sup>62</sup>

The not knowing the way a proposition comes into mind is not a perception that it is from God; and Locke's sober examination of the pretended inner light concludes that men are constantly led round this vicious circle: "it is a revelation because they firmly believe it, and they firmly believe it because it is a revelation."

We must never forget that further experience has shown that "Men may be as positive and peremptory in error as in truth."<sup>63</sup> We must remember that "God, when he makes the prophet, does not unmake the man. . . . When he illumines the mind with supernatural light, he does not extinguish the light which is natural."<sup>64</sup> "It is not the strength of our private persuasion," he concludes, "that can warrant [anything] to be a light or motion from heaven; nothing can do that but the written word of God without us, or that standard of reason which is common to us with all men."

#### 9. CHIEF POINTS OF A REASONABLE CHRISTIANITY

What are the chief points in that reasonable religion that Locke found delivered in the New Testament? As simply put as possible, it is natural religion plus one thing that reason, unaided, could never attain to—the knowledge that Jesus was the deliverer, the Christ, promised by God through the Old Testament Scriptures. By obedience to God eternal life is possible, but death comes through sin. He will have none of the tortured interpretations which make death mean eternal torment in hell: like Bertrand Russell he objects to thought processes which interpret the prohibition of labor on the seventh day as meaning that we must not play on the first day!

People who make Jesus Christ nothing but the restorer and preacher of natural religion—for modern liberalism was older than Locke—do violence to the whole tenor of the New Testament. There is only one article of revelation necessary for a true theist to add; but this one article, that Jesus was the promised Christ, is the chief thing, indeed, almost the whole new thing in the New Testament. Hamlet, without the Prince of Denmark, would hardly be as empty as the New Testament with all its moral teachings, but without the message that Jesus was the promised Christ.

The objection was made, and for some it still constitutes both a difficulty for scholarship and an obstacle to faith, that during the course of his ministry Jesus never declared himself to be that Messiah. He left it to his disciples to discover this; and even then prohibited them from telling it to others. Locke sets himself to show the reasonableness of that procedure.

As to the central question of his search, the careful study of the subject of justification, Locke found in the Scriptures no warrant for what the common people understand them to mean, when the theologians talk of justification by faith alone. Eternal life is the reward of justice or righteousness only; appointed by the righteous God to those only who had no taint or infection of sin. It is therefore "impossible that he should justify those who had no regard to justice, whatever they believed. This would have been to encourage iniquity, contrary to the purity of God's nature."<sup>65</sup> "Repentance is as absolute a condition of the covenant of grace, as faith: and as necessary to perform as that."<sup>66</sup> Faith in Christ is an aid to good works, not a substitute for them; and in the penitent and sincerely obedient, supplies for the defect of their performances, instead of doing away with all need for them.<sup>67</sup> He observes with great interest

that in none of Christ's descriptions of his final judgment is anyone sentenced or punished for unbelief, but only for their misdeeds. It is remarkable, he thinks, in light of the current theological talk about faith, that in all the places where the Savior mentions the last judgment "everywhere the sentence follows on doing or not doing; without any mention of believing or not believing."<sup>68</sup> We see, therefore, that it is not enough to believe him to be the Messiah, unless we obey his laws, and take him to be our king, to reign over us.<sup>69</sup>

I readily admit that Locke fails here to do justice to the subtleties of those theological positions which he did not find in the Scriptures. But there can be little doubt that those safeguarding theological subtleties have likewise usually been missed by common men, to their own hurt, if not to their eternal damnation. And what the great thinker is engaged in here is, not the logical validity of some systematic concepts, but the plain reasonableness of the religion he found in the Scriptures. I conclude with an eloquent and truthful passage that our learned theologians, if they would help mankind rather than simply indulge their dear intellectual delights, might somehow build into their systems. Nowhere else does the great empiricist so simply put that reasonable religion delivered in the Scriptures. And in spite of all the stinging attacks upon his position from the popular theologians, John Locke maintained he found this portrayal of Christianity in the New Testament. His book, indeed, had been published anonymously. It was not known then, but it should be remembered now, that this is what one of the world's greatest thinkers found in his search of the Scriptures.<sup>70</sup>

God, out of the infiniteness of his mercy, has dealt with man, as a compassionate and tender Father. He gave him reason, and with



it a law. . . . But considering the frailty of man, apt to run into corruption and misery, he promised a Deliverer, whom in his good time he sent; and then declared to all mankind; That whoever would believe him to be the Saviour promised, and take him now raised from the dead and constituted the Lord, and judge of all men, to be their King and ruler, should be saved. *This is a plain intelligible proposition:* and the all-merciful God seems to have considered the poor of the world, and the bulk of mankind. . . . The writers and wranglers in religion fill it with niceties, and dress it up with notions, which they make necessary and fundamental parts of it, as if there were no way into the church but through the academy and lyceum. . . . Had God intended that none but the learned scribe, the disputer, the wise of this world, should be Christians, or be saved . . . religion should have been prepared *for them*, filled with speculations and niceties, obscure terms and abstract notions. But men of that expectation . . . are rather shut out from the simplicity of the gospel, to make way for those poor, ignorant, illiterate, who heard and believed promises of a Deliverer, and believed Jesus to be him. . . . And if the poor had the gospel preached to them, it was, without doubt, such a gospel as the poor could understand.

## V. Pascal: the Great Mystic

*Do not, therefore, be surprised to see simple persons believing without reasoning about their belief. . . . No doubt they may be incapable of justifying their faith or convincing an unbeliever, but they themselves are effectually persuaded of its truth . . . and God gives them his love. He who loves Him, he whom He loves. That is enough.—Pascal, Pensées*

SOME of my readers versed in the history of philosophy will doubtless think that Pascal can hardly deserve a ranking with Descartes, Locke, and Spinoza as among the foremost founders of modern philosophy. It is true that many historians reduce him to a footnote.<sup>1</sup> One explanation is not far to find; there is probably an element of truth in the observation that "the philosophers could not forgive him for having spoken so ill of philosophy, and since he renounced their philosophy, they accuse him of denying reason."<sup>2</sup> For Pascal had once written, "The whole of philosophy is not worth an hour's study"<sup>3</sup>—though it may not be wise to quote that to students at the beginning of a course.

There is, indeed, a highly technical sense in which Pascal is not a philosopher at all. Bergson, however, regarded Descartes and Pascal as "the greatest representatives of the two forms or methods of thought between which the modern spirit is divided," nor need we be surprised at his remark that of the two, Pascal is the more profound.<sup>4</sup> Some may interpret this as merely

meaning that Bergson himself was more like Pascal; but the retort does not make Bergson's judgment unsound. Perhaps no one is a better approach to Pascal than this greatest philosopher of recent France. One of the most characteristic utterances of Pascal is his oftquoted word that "the heart has its reasons which the reason does not know."<sup>5</sup> The "heart" is for Pascal a working equivalent of that intuition, or that immediate whole-minded perception by undiscerned signs, which Bergson opposed to the intellect; the intellect which, as he saw it, moving by principles, reasonings, and demonstrations, forever fails to grasp the essence or the whole. It is, of course, this "reasoning" reason against which Pascal sets the heart's authority.<sup>6</sup>

If he had wished to ally himself with the philosophers and the scholars, Pascal could have supported his views by quotations from other great philosophers. He might have traced kinship between Platonic reason and what he himself called the "heart." It seems clear that some animus against philosophers and philosophy dictated Pascal's use of words or that he thought his purpose would not be furthered by philosophical support. But the truth is that his emphasis upon the "heart" has led to a common misunderstanding of Pascal. For he was not a mere romanticist. And in spite of the extremely intense feeling which marked his personal religious experience, he was never really a sentimentalist. But his personal experience and his practical purpose did seem to join in forcing him to sacrifice possible alliances among the thinkers. The unfortunate result is that he is ignored or depreciated by men who might have been his closest allies. Or if he chose his words for their popular appeal, the literary artist has become the victim of his own literary skill.

Hobbes and Locke are most famous for work which is not

our major interest in this book. In the case of Pascal, however, we have one who rose to greatest heights in religious thought. One philosopher, speaking recently in a French university, said of Pascal: "In proportion as the inner life of each one of us grows more mature, we understand him better."<sup>7</sup> Another proclaims him as the great predecessor of Kant and pragmatism, who insisted, as Kant did, that we approach God by way of our moral experience, not our scientific knowledge.<sup>8</sup> In Sorbonne lectures two others rank him, with Descartes, as one of the two giants of modern thought. The suffering of the war period brought a marked revival of interest in this superb prophet of suffering, who distrusted all other gifts of God; who believed no greater curse could be imposed on man than being condemned to walk one's life "in the sunlight of unshaded prosperity";<sup>9</sup> who could approve "only those who search groaning," who seek in tears for happiness.<sup>10</sup>

In times of tragic distress philosophy ceases to be the facile slinging of a professional jargon; it becomes the quest for answers to the questions raised when a man comes face to face with death without ceasing to think. Indeed, according to Montaigne philosophy is learning how to die. Before the end of this chapter, I believe, we shall be in agreement that, at least by this test, Blaise Pascal is rightly placed among the great.

But a study of Pascal need not be a mournful experience. There are many nuances of the modern mood which find him most congenial. Every graduate school harbors many men for whom the delights of the mind have gone stale; and others of our contemporaries are spiritual kin of this master who best expresses the mind's dissatisfaction with reason. Our pacifists, likewise, will eagerly claim him for his ridicule of the honored custom of war: "Is there anything more ridiculous than that a

man has a right to kill me because he lives across the water, and his prince has a quarrel with my prince, though I have none with him?"<sup>11</sup> And how aptly he puts our present international chaos: "Unable to fortify justice, men have justified force."

Especially in France is Pascal's merit being recognized. Long known as a master hand in French prose, as distinguished inventor, eminent physicist, and creative mathematician, he is increasingly revered as great philosopher and spiritual guide. Where the scientific quest seems but to extend frigid frontiers of knowledge; where worldly success reveals an aching void; where men are miserable without God; especially with such people is Pascal "one of the spiritual summits of humanity."<sup>12</sup>

It is true that he is French: and he is claimed by Chevalier as typically French.

He may be regarded as the man who most fully represents the spirit of the French . . . the incarnation of the spirit of his country. As scientist, thinker, artist, man; in the most exquisite irony, as in his most merciless satire; in his most condensed statements, as in his greatest eloquence and his loftiest poetic flights; in the logical processes of both thought and deed; and finally, in the highest spirituality, Pascal . . . has never been surpassed, and no other has united . . . so many diverse talents. In his ardent genius are concentrated all the gifts that characterize French thought and form its own peculiar nature,—the spirit of geometry, and the spirit of *finesse*; rhetoric combined with sentiment; a feeling for the positive and a faith in the ideal.

And certainly I, for one, will not quarrel with his judgment of the little volume of Pascal's *Thoughts*:

Even in the confused state in which they have reached us, without apparent order or systemic unity; in the distorted form and shaky

handwriting which the manuscript displays, . . . these same fragments constitute . . . France's most stupendous spiritual creation.<sup>13</sup>

### I. THE LIFE OF GENIUS

If we today raise the question how did this come about, the simplest answer is that a genius was born in 1623. At the age of eleven he composed a treatise on sound; at twelve, "with a few strokes and circles, discovered mathematics"; at sixteen he had written the most learned treatment of conic sections; at nineteen had invented a mathematical calculating machine; at twenty-three he demolished one of the greatest errors in ancient physics, laid the foundations of thermodynamics and of the calculus of probabilities, experimentally convinced the world of the existence of the vacuum in nature—and then found a greater void in his own heart!

A few years later, with other triumphs to his credit, a feeble body breaking under the strain of mental toil, he became, on doctor's orders, a man of the world; who, even if he remained exempt from grave crimes, did gain full knowledge of the world and its diversions—gambling, theaters, and the society of women. In that world he found men aiming at rest through excitement; "unable to overcome death and misery and ignorance, they persuade themselves that to be happy they have only not to think about them." <sup>14</sup>

Man [he said] is evidently made for thought: this is his whole dignity and his whole merit, and his whole duty is to think as he ought. Now the order of thought is to begin with self and with its author and its end. But what does the world think about? Never of these things, but of dancing, playing the lute, making verses, tilting at the ring, fighting; of making oneself a king, without considering what it means to be a king, or what to be a man.<sup>15</sup>

The last act is tragic, however pleasantly the play may have run through the earlier ones; at the end a handful of earth is flung on our heads and all is over forever.<sup>10</sup>

Yet is man proud; "we can even lose our life joyfully, if only men will but talk of it." <sup>17</sup>

In the social life of France he met the people for whom the ideal is good breeding—that art of excelling in all that concerns the pleasures and proprieties of life. He saw how "our own interest is a marvelous instrument for blinding our eyes pleasantly." <sup>18</sup> He concluded, at last, that all men naturally hate each other. He came to know the heart of man and how it must be treated; to judge clearly of people's thoughts by almost imperceptible signs; to sense that good behavior has neither rule nor law, its sole rule being to have none; that true eloquence makes light of eloquence, and true morality makes light of moral rules, and true philosophy lightly treats philosophy.<sup>19</sup> Such contacts did bring him better health; and they gave him that racy style and worldly manner which enabled his *Provincial Letters* to take the world by storm. But the world had awakened in him longings that it could never satisfy.

Brought up without normal boyish play, educated solely by a distinguished father, he says he became disgusted with the abstract sciences, so few people could communicate with him on such subjects.<sup>20</sup> He found one may easily be a very learned man and a bad geometer.<sup>21</sup> To the last he regarded geometry as the highest exercise of the mind, but he came to see it as so useless that he would "not take two steps for geometry's sake." <sup>22</sup> He confidently expected to find more companions in the study of man. "I was in error," he says, "there are fewer students of man than of geometry."

Then, with social success achieved; with scientific reputation

established; and having been made the companion of dukes and doctors, he experienced, says his sister Jacqueline, "a great contempt for the world, and an almost insupportable aversion for the society of the worldings." The fact is that he had heard the talk of simple pious Christians; had caught a nameless yearning from stirring Christian preaching, and was dreaming of that "higher order where the great truths lie." <sup>28</sup>

*Then God Spoke to Him in Fire*

We should like to study that mystic experience in this man of proven genius. We who read him feel that he has seen more deeply into our own hearts than ever we have done ourselves. There are, in turn, many things he tells us, indirectly, of his own tortuous pilgrimage. But he appears to have intended to deny even to his closest intimates knowledge of that greatest experience. He may have remembered Paul's word about experiences unlawful for a man to utter. At least he never gave it to the world, and we can now read his secret memorial only because in some high sense, "dead men have no rights."

The famed scientist, man of the world, sold his carriage and fine horses; sold his silver and beautiful furniture; disposed of his library; and went to live at Port Royal. His moves were seen of men; but none were told what had happened on that Monday night, November twenty-third, when Pascal was thirty-one.

When he died in August, eight years later, years mostly filled with cruel suffering, he had produced two of the greatest classics of French religious literature, the *Provincial Letters*, and the notes for an Apology, the famous *Thoughts*. Several days after his death, when Pascal's clothes were being disposed of, a servant noticed a curious little bulge in the lining of a coat



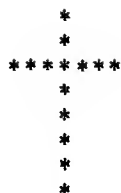
which Pascal long had worn. Sewed inside the lining was found a folded parchment, and inside this a scribbled sheet of paper, which remains today one of the treasures of the Bibliothèque Nationale, in Paris. One appeared to be a copy of the other. It seems clear that one of them may be regarded as Pascal's own notes on his two transforming hours in the presence of God; his own secret memorial of the coming of grace. Bishop offers the likely supposition that the paper, which still remains, was the original record, written immediately after the ecstasy, and that the parchment was the permanent memorial, with some changes prompted by reflection.<sup>24</sup>

At the top of the sheet of paper stands a cross. The contents of the sheet, and the arrangement in lines is suggested on the opposite page, with some material omitted at the end.

## 2. PASCAL'S RULING IDEAS

That experience, lasting past the Monday midnight, did not give Pascal a new set of ideas; its significance was not for the reason, but for the heart. It did not so much change his ideas as remake the man. From that time he was more clearly committed to an order of reality higher than mind—feeling that it is not enough to know; sensing acutely that there is "an infinite distance between knowing God and loving him."<sup>25</sup> Henceforth he is numbered among the very few who pursue excellence as passionately as men seek facts of physics or speculative truth. Practically and theoretically he henceforth knew that, not intellect but goodness, is humanity's highest form.

It is said that Aquinas, after a mystical experience, laid aside the unfinished *Summa*, and when Father Reginald urged completing it, Saint Thomas replied, "I can do no more. Such secrets have been revealed to me that all I have written now

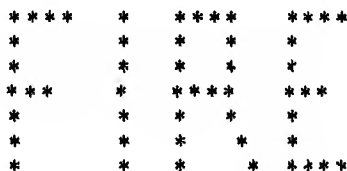


The Year of Grace, 1654

Monday, twenty-third November, day of Saint Clement,  
Pope and Martyr, and others in the Martyrology.

Eve of Saint Chrysogonus, martyr, and others,

From about half-past ten in the evening until about half-past twelve



GOD OF ABRAHAM, GOD OF ISAAC, GOD OF JACOB,

*Not of the Philosophers and Scholars.*

*Certitude, Certitude, Feeling, Joy, Peace.*

GOD OF JESUS CHRIST

*Deum meum et Deum vestrum. Thy God will be my God.*

Forgetfulness of the World and of Everything but *God*.

He is to be found only by the ways taught in the gospel.

Greatness of the Human Soul.

O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee, but I have known thee.

Joy, Joy, Joy, Tears of Joy.

I have been separated from him . . . Jesus Christ. *Jesus Christ.*

appears to me to be of little value." <sup>26</sup> So he spoke about the greatest presentation of Catholic theology! It is only after his mystic experience that Pascal began his greatest writing, and fortunately it is our task to follow him just there.

But as we follow him, we should be well guarded against a mistake that many have made. They have thought of Pascal as passing through a scientific period, then laying aside science for the things of the world; and after something of a worldly fling finally becoming religious. It is far truer to insist that he was from beginning to end a scientist, a man, and a Christian; that he developed in all these directions; that his scientific vision became wider and more direct; that he sensed ever more deeply the heart of man; and that he came ever closer to the God of Jesus Christ.<sup>27</sup> He knew doubts, scientific method, worldly pessimism. None were driven from his life by his mystic experience. In fact it was precisely because these were vitally retained that the scraps of his apologetic are one of the supreme expressions of French genius. And the same ruling ideas are discernible in every phase or period of his life.

In spite of his stinging assaults on reason, I deliberately put first among these ruling ideas an appreciation of the worth, dignity, and power of the mind in man. It is vain to cite against me his isolated brilliant sallies against reason. These are best understood as cutting thrusts at rationalism. The apology which he struggled to write in the last two years was conceived in accord with the truest scientific method. It was a constant endeavor to satisfy the claims of reason and to vindicate the reasonableness of resorting to the wager on God, when the utmost exercise of intellectual powers left an uncertain, aching void. No mathematician ever more clearly stated, for our ultimate questions, the final irrelevance of the one certain science. But

wherever he attacked or belittled geometry, it was with full command of all the powers reason affords. He but defined the limits of reason to indicate its true greatness, which consists, at last, in submitting to reality.<sup>28</sup> So nothing is more consistent with reason than disavowing it in matters which surpass it.

Thus, for Pascal the scholar stands on a level with sovereigns; they but have dominion over bodies, while he commands men's minds.<sup>29</sup> Indeed, the authority of reason is far more imperious than that of a master; for he who disobeys the one is unhappy, but he who disobeys the other is a fool.<sup>30</sup> And what is in man is greater than what is in the world; for while it is true that

man is only a reed, the feeblest of nature, he is a thinking reed. The entire universe need not arm itself to crush him; a vapor, a drop of water suffices to kill him. But though the universe may crush him, man would still be nobler than that which kills him; for he would know he died, and the advantage the universe had over him; of which the universe knows nothing. All our dignity consists then in thought. It is from that we must gain our elevation, and not from space and time, which we cannot fill. Let us strive then to think well: that is the principle of ethics.<sup>31</sup>

His mystic hours with God did not compel the withdrawal of this basic idea.

It seemed to him a deep ignorance to imagine nature began to exist at the time that it began to be known. It is equally ignorant to argue that what is incomprehensible to man must therefore have no being. Science had revealed to him that reality infinitely surpasses our conceptions of it and that concepts, which are the work of man, must yield to facts, which are of God and which rightly impose themselves on man. This view, also, survived his mysticism.

It seemed to Pascal that nothing was more likely to disgust

intelligent unbelievers than to insist that God is clearly revealed in nature.<sup>82</sup> There is, indeed, light enough for those whose main wish is to see; but there is also darkness enough to blind those whose hearts are differently disposed. For him all things conceal some mystery; they are all veils that conceal God.<sup>83</sup> His whole being seemed to become sensitive to a shimmering veil behind which the reason could not reach; and Isaiah 45:15 seems to be the Scripture quoted most: "Verily thou art a God that hidest Thyself." And it was these baffling intimations of God that tortured his soul.

If I saw nothing in nature that intimated a divinity, I would determine to believe nothing concerning him. If I saw everywhere the traces of a creator, I would peacefully repose in faith; but seeing too much evidence to justify a denial, and too little to minister assurance, I am in a pitiable state, in which I have wished a hundred times that if a God sustains nature . . . nature would speak conclusively or not at all.<sup>84</sup>

Pascal came finally to see that it is not in things beyond our reach that values are greatest; that nothing is more common than good things; that it is not in things extraordinary that excellence is found. Speaking of the good, he wrote, "We rise to reach it, and are farther from it. Most frequently it is necessary to stoop for it."<sup>85</sup> The final development of this might engage our attention at the last, for in his last days he almost seemed to continue his mystic communion with God through fellowship with the poor of Paris. But all this is perfectly in line with what he had learned in his earliest experiments in physics—the extreme importance of common facts, little noticed, near at hand. You will have noticed how I linger on these facts, because of the light they throw on one of the great questions—whether the mystical experiences are intellectually creative.

This insight into things beyond and this enhanced appreciation of the near-at-hand at last turned the ardent investigator and often proud controversialist into a Christian philosopher for whom life's deepest word was "submission." He saw mathematical science as submission to the infinite; physical science as only submission to competent experiments; ethics and history, also, as submission to well-established facts, even when they were incomprehensible. And the last step taken by reason, "the recognition that there is an infinite number of things that surpass it,"<sup>38</sup> brought the scientific genius to the point where life's deepest joy was submission—submission as simple as that of ancient fishermen, to one who did not proclaim the things of God with the second-hand technique of the scribes; but with such authority that then, and through subsequent ages, men appropriated for him the most exalted terms their language made available.

### 3. THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

The main lines of his projected apologetic are given us by a nephew and by a friend, both having been present during two thrilling hours in which Pascal sketched his argument. To their surprise, he proposed to lay aside all metaphysics, to disregard the common lines of demonstration, and to aim, not at coercing intellects, but more at winning wills. Two passages of his *Thoughts* show how his mind moved along these lines. The first is as follows:

I shall not undertake here to prove by natural reason either the existence of God or the Trinity, or the immortality of the soul, or anything of that sort, not only because I do not feel myself sufficiently able to find in nature proofs to convince hardened atheists, but also because this knowledge without Jesus Christ is useless and barren. Though a man should be persuaded that the proportions

of numbers are immaterial truths, eternal and dependent upon a first truth in whom they persist, and whom we call God, I should not consider him far advanced toward his salvation.<sup>87</sup>

For the second, I piece together three fragments.

The metaphysical proofs of God are so remote from the reasoning of men, and so involved, that they make little impression; and while they may avail for some, it is only during the moment of seeing the demonstration; and an hour later they fear they have been deceived.<sup>88</sup>

This sort of proof can lead only to a speculative knowledge of God; and to know him in this way only is not to know him at all.<sup>89</sup>

The God of the Christians is not merely the divine author of geometric truths, and of the order of the elements: this is the belief of the heathen. He is not merely a God who exercises his providence over the lives and fortunes of men, to bestow a succession of happy years on his worshippers: this is the God of the Jew. But the God . . . of the Christians is a God of love and consolation: he is a God who fills the soul and the heart which he possesses; a God who makes them feel within, their own misery, and his infinite mercy; who unites himself with their inmost soul; fills it with humility, and joy, and confidence, and love; and makes it impossible for them to seek any other end than himself. . . . This is to know God as a Christian. But to know God thus, a man must know also his misery, and his own unworthiness, and the need he has of a redeemer. . . . The knowledge of God, without the knowledge of our ruin, is pride. The knowledge of our ruin, without the knowledge of Jesus Christ, is despair. But the knowledge of Jesus Christ delivers us both from pride and despair, because in him we discern at once our God, our guilt, and the only way of our recovery.<sup>40</sup>

There are in Pascal many interesting anticipations of what in our time has come to be called the theory of emergence, some of which must engage our attention before we follow him into his great battle with the Jesuits. According to Pascal we cannot pass from the natural to the supernatural by a continuous series

of gradations. The supernatural is not the invisible periphery of nature, and it does not arise out of nature. It is reality of another order. And these discontinuous realities, which we may join him in calling the orders of reality, all deliver their secrets to man on terms we cannot dictate. The adding of any known magnitude to bodies or even the addition of infinite magnitude to known bodies can never raise a body into the order of mind. And no accumulation of reasoned knowledge can amount to knowledge of the divine truths. They are infinitely above natural knowledge, and God alone can introduce them into the mind. We are as helpless there as we are to introduce mind into matter; and God has ordained that we must love them in order to know them.<sup>41</sup> And the order of love is as infinitely above knowledge as the order of mind is above matter. And so of every order of reality: it becomes accessible to the poor in spirit. Even when investigating sensibly discernible nature, man must be humble. In science itself there is a required attitude and a prescribed discipline which can best be summed up in the one word "humility." And those alone reach the farthest point of vision who are willing long to go forward without seeing.<sup>42</sup>

#### 4. THE PROVINCIAL LETTERS

The *Thoughts* of Pascal are too fragmentary and too exalted to make easy reading. The *Provincial Letters*, however, were written in an easy, racy, elegant vernacular which made all France scramble for copies and made D'Alembert say that pleasantries had been theologized. As a classic in French prose, easily put into English, they may be read with delight and profit, even without any background knowledge. But they can be properly understood only as set in their times, as the church



was freshly facing the great question as to how far it should make concessions to the world in an effort to gain popularity and power. For that century was the time in which the present struggle between the Christian faith and a pagan naturalism was first clearly seen; and what a Christian must be and do was the ultimate issue between Pascal and the Society of Jesus.<sup>43</sup>

The century brought on in France an acute crisis in the inward life, following the upheavals of Reformation and Renaissance. The civil wars, the great economic and social changes, had deeply affected the national mood; and many people were athirst for novelty. In the upper classes liberty in thought was often joined to license in morals. Atheism was still not openly flaunted, but behind closed doors many were "mixing atheism with their whoredoms"; and an occasional voluptuary proclaimed that all our troubles proceed from a "miserable Jew."<sup>44</sup> As often happens after great agony of mind, long restrained appetites ran wild in new freedom. The more advanced Christians used Epictetus as a prayer book until ready for the scepticism of Montaigne's *Essays*.

The challenge of the age sharply divided the church on the question of basic policy. The Society of Jesus represented, then, modernism within the church; and with an uncertainly proportioned mixture of concession to human weakness and desire to ride to power, the Jesuits came to seem to many truly devout Christians mere "cut-rate dealers in salvation." The Jansenists, centered at Port Royal, discerned and denounced the laxity in morals to which the Jesuits seemed to consent. They pointed out the perils in the rising belief in the original goodness of man. The current exaltation of humanity, with its stress on reason and liberty, seemed to them to endanger all religious

faith and social control. Both sides, of course, were abundantly armored with theological shibboleths; and the stock charges were secret affinities with Calvin or with atheism, both equally deadly.

Pascal's first vital contact with Christianity was with Jansenism. After his mystical experience he moved to the Jansenist headquarters at Port Royal, even though the leaders of the movement were just then on trial for alleged disagreement with Augustine. In a recent Sorbonne trial the part of Jansen had been condemned, and their great leader, Arnauld, was at this very time hiding in the sanctuary. Each word from Paris made the outlook darker, and the whole movement seemed doomed.

In that critical situation someone suggested an appeal to the public, saying that the theological argument had become so intricate that no one outside the Sorbonne knew the party rivalry involved, and that the public did not penetrate the theological fog to grasp the facts. But when Arnauld read to the inner circle, his proposed appeal, it was received without applause, and the faces of his adoring friends too plainly showed their real judgment. Arnauld's eminence in controversy was everywhere admitted, and even Leibniz thought him one of the greatest theologians and philosophers of the time. But the present situation called for something more than scholarship and weighty language, and Arnauld quickly sensed that he had failed to give that "something more." Then, as if by inspiration, he turned to Pascal, saying, "You are young; you ought to be able to do something." <sup>45</sup>

Pascal had never to their knowledge written anything but scientific articles, and from the standpoint of weighty theological dispute he could only be regarded as a brilliant and perhaps

erratic amateur. But he had shown ability "to summarize difficult ideas in arresting formulas" and was known for a witty eloquence in speech.<sup>40</sup> So an inner group of Port Royal became a consulting council, and Pascal plunged into preparations for theological controversy.

It is possible that he still had some personal resentment toward the Jesuits who had so strongly opposed him in scientific work; and this was re-enforced by his conviction that their idea of free will was scientifically unsound. Probably an urge to authorship had not altogether perished. Certainly he joined in Port Royal's love for their great general. Perhaps, as Bishop suggests in his biography, the excitements of mysticism may have dwindled in that intervening year to a routine exercise. At any rate, Pascal threw himself eagerly into the effort to defend Port Royal and the view of Christianity which they represented. In a few days he read to the consulting council a proposed appeal to the public. It was in the form of a letter written from Paris to a provincial friend concerning the disputes in the Sorbonne. It was signed "Louis de Montalte," which was recognized everywhere as a pseudonym, but the secret of the actual authorship was carefully guarded until after Pascal's death. We must remember that in most of Europe the press was carefully licensed and controlled and that most books of genuine importance were issued in secret or published only after an author's death, when the church no more could touch his person.

The first of the famous *Provincial Letters* begins: "My dear Sir: Well, we were much mistaken. I learned the facts only yesterday: for, till then, I had imagined that the disputes of the Sorbonne were really of the utmost consequence to the interests of religion."

The racy style was something new in theological dispute;

and, indeed, it remains almost exciting reading even today. That eight-page letter was followed by seventeen others in about fourteen months. They made the social halls of Europe ring with laughter at the contrivances whereby the Jesuits helped people to invert every principle of morals, and evade all the obligations of their religion. This one volume has been judged to have done more to make this formidable society the contempt of Europe than was ever done by all its other enemies put together. It has fixed a popular meaning for "Jesuit" and casuistry, in much the same way that the Gospels have established the meaning of Pharisee.

Was Pascal right in his initial belief that the controversy was over words, not over facts or faith? I think he came to see that this was not the case; that he came to recognize, further, that the abuse of casuistry does not prove that it has no proper use. He seems later to have exempted more of the Jesuit teachers from his stinging charges, and he even came to see that in some essentials they were nearer right than the Jansenists. But even in the following years, during the period of the life of love, he appears to have had no regrets at having written the *Provincial Letters*, with their terrific indictment of Jesuit morality. In his *Thoughts*, written later, he says: "Far from repenting, if I had it to do again, I would write them yet more strongly."<sup>47</sup> I sometimes find myself wondering if Jesus might not make similar reply if confronted with the evidence which our diligent scholars have unearthed, by which they prove that the Gospels are quite unfair to the Pharisees.

#### 5. SHALL WE PLEASE UNREPENTANT SINNERS?

Christian ministers of today have much to learn from Pascal. They, too, are likely to sink down to preaching sermons thor-

oughly pleasing to unrepentant sinners or, as Bossuet said it, "putting cushions under sinners' elbows." They need Pascal as a tonic when they are tempted overmuch to accommodate their gospel message to popular desires or to take as their own the world's convenient morals. And they need his sharp censure for the ministry that substitutes party advantage for the gospel task.

Out of the depths of his own suffering, Pascal protests against the Jesuits's ingenious devices for escaping idolatry by deceiving the world; and at their extreme accommodations to contemporary culture. He charges that where a crucified Jesus passes for foolishness, they suppress the scandal of the cross and preach only Jesus Christ in his glory.<sup>48</sup> "Simon would have been perfectly fortified against the anathema of Saint Peter had he been lucky enough to have known your modern doctrines."<sup>49</sup> Employing skillfully the devices of the drama, with sly irony, stinging satire, passionate eloquence, he shows the lengths to which ministers of Christ may go when their principal purpose is to please everybody.<sup>50</sup> Jesuit spokesmen march on his pages and display their technique of getting plain Catholics to oppose others, against whom the Jesuits are trying to gratify private grudges, in affairs of no consequence to the church of Christ.<sup>51</sup> Their accommodating authorities are paraded, almost boasting of their skillful loading of such fetters and restrictions as to annihilate gospel obligations. Their concessions to human weakness become so generous as to imply that there are incomparably more persons justified through ignorance and forgetfulness of God than by grace.<sup>52</sup> They seem to him to have forgotten the law of God and to have so extinguished the light of nature as to need reminding of the simplest principles of religion and common sense.<sup>53</sup>

You make a mock of religion [he says] to gratify the passions of mankind. Your usual course [is] to allow men to have whatever they desire and to give mere words and forms to God.<sup>54</sup>

It signifies nothing what abominations you bring to the table of Jesus Christ, provided your churches be full.<sup>55</sup>

Play inform me, my good fathers, by what authority you *permit* that which divine and human law concur in prohibiting?<sup>56</sup>

A crowd of modern and obscure authors have been substituted for the holy fathers.<sup>57</sup>

No assemblage of short quotations can ever reveal the power of his pen. Knowing his Jesuit authorities with the aid of the consulting council in Port Royal, but ever checking their quotations, he literally *exhibits* them authoritatively nullifying the precepts of Christ. But the mockery was not play. Irony became argument; and their own spokesmen almost make them slanderers by profession. They are exposed measuring the faith and virtue of mankind, not by attitudes toward Jesus Christ, but by their opinions of the Jesuit order. They seem to have forgotten that the truth of God stands in no need of our lies.<sup>58</sup> "They think it both beneficial and necessary to the interest of religion . . . that they should obtain the direction of every one's conscience." <sup>59</sup>

With the deadly effect of clear thought and great art he exposes the tragic folly of those who busy themselves making Christianity pleasant and interesting; who devise methods to make devotion easy; who enable Christians to work out their own salvation without any trouble and to remain at ease in their licentiousness. He cuts into tatters their doctrine of attrition; ridicules their carefully articulated ambiguities; exposes their dishonest mental reservations; and boldly attacks their Mary-magic. He seems to have been aware of no need of intercessors

in dealing with God. He insists on drawing distinctions between faith and facts, and obedient to Rome in one, appeals beyond it to heaven on the other.

But did ever a controversialist so consistently train his light artillery and heavy guns on positions, not on persons? It seems that the Gospels were his model. He notes that they contain not a single invective against the enemies and murderers of Jesus. So he likewise utters no syllable against any individual in particular, saying that he would be extremely sorry to expose secret and personal faults.<sup>60</sup> But one is shown priests complaisant toward the rich and haughty toward the poor. Preachers are presented who maintain that it is possible to be saved without ever once loving God. And what argumentative power was packed into single sentences! None of the letters is long; no one ever knew better when to stop. Listen to his piercing thrust at the Jesuit doctrine of intention, whereby, with sufficient imaginative power, a priest could help a Christian to justify any crime, if done with thought properly directed: "I don't know if one wouldn't feel less annoyance at being brutally killed by men in anger than at feeling oneself highmindedly stabbed by the pious!"<sup>61</sup>

#### 6. HIGHER THAN THE BATTLE FOR TRUTH

Yet neither the worldly success of the *Provincial Letters* nor Port Royal's well-authenticated miracle of the holy thorn could do more than delay the crushing of Jansenism, just as Catholic France had destroyed the Huguenots. Even during the composition of the *Provincial Letters* Pascal came to see that he was waging his warfare on the level of truth and that for a Christian this was not enough. He doubtless came to realize, also, that personal ambition was playing its part even on his own side

of the struggle; and apparently at the height of battle he withdrew from this and other contests. A short time later he wrote this letter:

We act as if it were our mission to make truth triumph; instead of which our mission is only to fight for her. The desire for conquest is so natural that when it is concealed by the desire to make truth triumph, the one is often mistaken for the other, and we believe we are seeking God's glory, when we are really seeking our own.<sup>62</sup>

That word came from a man speaking from beyond controversy engaged at last on a level even higher than the battle for truth. He was within a year of his death, which occurred at thirty-nine, and was writing in his proposed *Apologetics* about his final insights:

All bodies, the heavens, earth, the stars and kingdoms are not equal in value to the meanest mind. . . . We cannot elicit from universal matter a single thought: it is impossible, [for] thought is of a higher order of creation. . . . And all bodies, and all minds united, and all their productions, are not worth one emotion of love . . . this also is impossible, [for] love is of another and higher order of being.<sup>63</sup>

Do not, therefore, be surprised to see simple persons believing without reasoning about their belief. . . . No doubt they may be incapable of justifying their faith or convincing an unbeliever, but they themselves are effectually persuaded of its truth . . . and God himself gives them his love. He who loves Him, he whom He loves. That is enough.<sup>64</sup>

The great controversialist had sickened of the fierce clashing of embattled creeds and was thinking much of One who bore in silent love more wrongs than any man. And from Pascal's final days come sketchy fragments of reflection and devotion which transcend all bounds of nation, race, century, or sect.



## 7. THE MYSTERY OF JESUS

Following the passage about love, the higher order of creation, are these three seed thoughts, to be expanded in the philosophy of Christianity which he hoped to write:

"Jesus Christ lived in such obscurity, according to the estimate of the world, that historians who record none but important events, scarcely noticed him." <sup>65</sup> I take it that this would have been used to emphasize a discontinuity between the order of historic fact and the higher reality of love. Then this follows:

What man ever had more renown than Jesus Christ? The whole Jewish people foretell his coming. The Gentile, when he comes, adore him. And yet, what man ever enjoyed so little of such fame? Out of thirty-three years, he remained thirty unseen; and the remaining three, he was counted an impostor. . . . No man was ever so illustrious; no man was ever so degraded; but all this splendor was for our sakes, that we might know him, none for his own.<sup>66</sup>

The third, with which I close, he called *The Mystery of Jesus*. Like the Memorial, it may never have been intended for our eyes. Few things can surpass this meditation of the Christian mystic, as his imagination lingers in Gethsemane. I have borrowed here from three translations, and in some few places used my own.<sup>67</sup>

Jesus suffers in his *passion* the torments that men *inflict* on him; but in his *agony* he suffers the torments he takes upon *himself*.

Jesus seeks some consolation at least in his three dearest friends,—and they sleep.

Jesus is alone in the world: not only to *feel* and *share* his pain; no other even *knows* it: Heaven and he are alone in this knowledge.

Jesus is in a garden, not of delights, as the first Adam, where he doomed himself and all the human kind; but in one of torture, where He saved himself and all the human kind.

He suffered this pain and this forsaking in the horror of the night.

I think that Jesus never murmured, save only this one time: . . .

"My soul is sorrowful, even unto death."

Jesus seeks companionship and comfort from men. That is unique in all his life, I think. But he receives none; for his disciples sleep.

Jesus will be in agony until the end of time: we must not sleep during *all* that time.

Jesus being in agony and in the greatest woes, let us pray longer. . . .

Then comes an indicated break in the text, and what follows is the Lord's imagined reply:

Console yourself: you would not *seek* me if you had not found me.

I was thinking of you in my agony: I have shed some drops of blood for *you*.

Would you have me spend forever the blood of my humanity, and you give no tears?

The doctors will not cure you; for you will die in the end. . . .

Suffer the chains and the corporal servitude: it is only from the spiritual I deliver you at present.<sup>88</sup>

I end the quotation with Pascal's reply: "Lord, I give thee all."

Then, a related fragment:

Thus I stretch out my arms to my Redeemer . . . and, by his grace, I await death in peace, in the hope of being united eternally with him; yet I live my life with joy, either in the prosperity it pleases him to give me, or in the evils which he sends me for my good, and which he, by his example, has taught me to endure.<sup>89</sup>

That, for the great mystic, is what it means to be a Christian.

Most of us have struggled through so much ponderous mystery or suffered so much from labored learning, that we can scarcely comprehend that this meditation comes from one of the master thinkers of the world.

## VI. Spinoza: the Great Rationalist

*If a man abounds in the fruits of the Spirit . . . whether . . . taught by reason only or by the Scripture only, he has been in very truth taught by God, and is altogether blessed.—*  
Spinoza, *Theological Political Tract*

SHORTLY AFTER Spinoza's death the neighborhood barber sent in his little bill, referring to "Mr. Spinoza, of blessed memory." Applying that term to the excommunicate Jew was something of a scandal, but Baruch (Blessed) is what his parents called him. And though multitudes have hurled anathemas at his person and his teachings, a steadily increasing number reveres the name of the blessed Spinoza.<sup>1</sup>

Judging by directive influence exerted on the trend of thought, Descartes was undoubtedly the central thinker of his time, and he has rightly been treated first. But solitary and unappreciated as Spinoza was, every great thought current in the century left such clear traces on him that Höffding can, from this standpoint, regard Spinoza as the central thinker of his age.<sup>2</sup> He held with Descartes that clear and distinct ideas are necessarily true, and he carried out the Cartesian idea that philosophy should be thrown into geometrical form. With Hobbes he rejected the claims of religious institutions to authority over the civil power, asserting that in all matters of conduct the state must be supreme. He held that belief in the dependability of natural sequences is indispensable to serious investigation of

nature, thus encouraging the development of science. He eagerly followed experiments in the new-born sciences and conducted researches on his own account. In some matters he held with Locke that reason is incompetent apart from material furnished by experience. And glowing in his life and books there is an exalted mysticism, more permanent than Pascal's. Further, the love of liberty, the horror at religion's bloody wars, the refusal to confine thought to grooves shaped by the theologians, the art-interest of Holland's great age—all these tendencies caught Spinoza's mind and heart. But these varied and conflicting tendencies were woven by him into a vast and harmonious unity which gained double expression, each being a masterpiece unique in its kind—the moral system of the thinker, and the worthy life of the man.

It is doubtful if there ever lived another man on whom judgments have so steadily run to sharp extremes. Many feared him as the most dangerous unbeliever and atheist. One thinker referred to him as "the miserable Spinoza"; and even Hume heaped abuse on his "hideous hypothesis." Yet even his pious contemporaries concede that he was a good man. That judgment has never wavered; and he often now is called the holy outcast—outcast because he thought too much of God.

Spinoza's strongest appeal has been to the great poets. Strange that this most forbidding face that philosophy has ever worn should have so intrigued and gripped men like Goethe, Schiller, Shelley, Coleridge, and Wordsworth. Goethe was first attracted to him by the complete unselfishness which he found on every page; and it was there that the great German first found peace for his soul. Heine got from those pages the same impression as from nature's most vital quiescence and peace. While standing in a friend's home, Coleridge kissed the face

of Spinoza in the title page of a borrowed book and said, "This book is a gospel to me."<sup>3</sup>

That gospel at last impressed the theologians. F. D. Maurice, great prophet and apostle of social Christianity, spoke of him with the bated breath of a hero worshipper; Schleiermacher, in his great Berlin sermons, made impassioned reference to the "rejected but holy Spinoza." Ernest Renan unveiled a statue of Spinoza with this tribute: "Woe to him who in passing should hurl an insult at this gentle and pensive head. He would be punished, as all vulgar souls are punished, by his very vulgarity, and by his incapacity to conceive what is divine. This man, from his granite pedestal, will point out to all men the way of blessedness which he found; and ages hence, the cultivated traveller, passing this spot, will say in his heart: The truest vision man ever had of God came, perhaps, here."<sup>4</sup>

#### I. THE STRANGE LENS GRINDER

In a treatise which practically founded modern biblical criticism Spinoza says that for the proper understanding of the Bible, the life, the conduct, and studies of the author of each book should be studied, also who he was, what was the occasion and epoch of his writing, for whom he wrote, and in what language. "It is important," he continues, "to be acquainted with the life, the conduct and the pursuits of the author; moreover it becomes easier to explain a man's writings in proportion as we have more intimate knowledge of his genius and temperament."<sup>5</sup>

Applying his saying to himself, we may note that Spinoza was born of Portuguese Jews, who, having been forcibly baptized, later escaped to Holland, and in that haven of freedom became Jews again. Of the growth of his scepticism concerning

the beliefs of his people he did not write, but we have the solemn formula by which he was forever banned from Judaism.<sup>6</sup> As we read the multiplied anathemas we do well to meditate upon the ineffectiveness of all the terrible maledictions of the clergy. It tends to make us more humble and may prevent our claiming for church and clergy a monopoly on God's grace and power.

To earn a living, Spinoza learned to grind lenses. Students from Holland's greatest university walked the six miles to Rhijnsburg to talk to the remarkable workman. They found he knew Descartes better than did their best professors. Scientists, artists, and statesmen called and corresponded. In order to grind his lenses and to be assured of freedom to think, he declined a call to the chair of philosophy at Heidelberg. He rejected repeated offers of financial assistance, refusing the chance of a pension from Europe's greatest monarch.

Dutch justice enabled Spinoza to defeat a scheming sister who planned to cheat her excommunicated brother from his inherited estate. And when Spinoza legally won the entire estate he took nothing but a bed. After his death, the bed and some finished lenses were sold to pay the funeral expenses, and his remains, we are told, found a free resting place in a Dutch Christian church. That outline can be filled in with much detail of fact and fancy. The one unmistakable item is that his was an embodiment of the life of reason. And many students of Spinoza will agree that this "miserable Jew" was, in realistic ways, the best Christian among our great philosophers.

Such a judgment is preposterous if one accepts the tests of membership which Christian churches have traditionally used. But when the general substance of life and practice are allowed the weight which Jesus gave them, and expressed assent to

verbal formulas is likewise evaluated by his standards, it will not seem strange to assert that the greatest modern Jew was a great Christian thinker. He maintained that justice and charity are the only sure signs of the true catholic faith; the church has more commonly insisted that submission to pope, creed, or council was the surer sign of catholicity. He held that the former are the true fruits of the Holy Spirit and that wherever they are found, there Christ in truth abides, and that where they are absent, Christ is absent also. It is true that official spokesmen for the church have seldom really used this test of faithfulness to Christ. But it can be given good New Testament warrant, and it need not be withdrawn even though it paradoxically imply that an excommunicate philosopher could be more Christian than the pope.

## 2. SPINOZA NO ASCETIC

Spinoza was a good man as a result of his careful reasoning, not through any visitation of supernatural grace. It was no dread of hell or dream of heaven which kept him true to moral laws. His doctrine of the infinite number of the attributes of God would have permitted rich speculations and poetic flights to heaven. But what we can know of God in the present life filled him with abounding joy. Heaven itself could offer no greater bliss than earth affords to any man who knows and loves the one true God.

Before tracing his way of salvation and his identification of the goal of right philosophy with the aim of true religion we must remove a common misunderstanding of Spinoza. He has so often been portrayed grinding lenses in his lonely garret and giving more perfect polish to his *Ethics*, that an opinion has grown up that he was by nature an ascetic recluse, preferring

solitude. The actual fact is that he was socially inclined. So many people sought his company and his letters that he had trouble protecting his time for work. It seems clear, too, that he realized he was writing one of the masterpieces of man's mind. He likewise knew the inner ravages of the disease afflicting him. Long stretches of solitude were the price a weakened man paid to complete a masterpiece.

As little does the great rationalist fit the common picture of the thinking machine. His own ideal was the rounded development of human powers. He said that "he who possesses a body capable of the greatest number of activities possesses a mind whereof the greater part is eternal."<sup>7</sup> He gives a memorable statement of the superiorities of the social life to the state of nature.

Let satirists laugh their fill at human affairs, let theologians rail, and let misanthropes praise to their utmost the life of untutored rusticity; let them heap contempt on men and praises on beasts; when all is said they will find that men can provide for their wants much more easily by mutual help, and that only by uniting their forces can they escape the dangers that on every side beset them.<sup>8</sup>

Another passage brings this social ideal nearer to personal practice. "Assuredly, nothing forbids man to enjoy himself, save grim and gloomy superstition. . . . No deity, nor anyone else, save the envious, takes pleasure in my infirmity and discomfort, nor sets down to my virtue the tears, sobs, fear, and the like, which are signs of infirmity of spirit. . . . It is the part of a wise man to refresh and recreate himself with moderate and pleasant food and drink, and also with perfumes, with the soft beauty of growing plants, with dress, with music, with many sports, with theaters, and the like, such as every man can make use of without injury to his neighbor."<sup>9</sup> And



quite in line with the view of that passage is the fact that his own library, bought from scant earnings, contained more books of literature than of philosophy and science.<sup>10</sup>

### 3. THE RELIGIOUS REALIST

Spinoza is one of the great religious realists, significant for having enforced the view that one who has the good fruits has been taught of God, whatever the process by which they came. In one letter, dealing with the relation of theology to the love of God, he insists that we should not love God through fear of punishment and that love can never spring from fear; nor should we love him for the love of something further, some other delight of our own which we hope to get through love of him, for in such case we should really be loving, not God, but that other object of our desires. He then continues:

I have shown that God revealed this law to the prophets, so that, whether it received from God the form of a command, or whether we conceive it to be like God's other decrees, which involve eternal necessity and truth, it will in either case remain God's decree, and a salutary principle. Whether I love God in freedom, or whether I love him from the necessity of the divine decree, I shall nevertheless love God, and shall be in a state of salvation.<sup>11</sup>

This point is so essential for a right understanding of Spinoza and intrinsically of such practical consequence for a realistic ministry that it must be approached from still other angles.

If a man is absolutely ignorant of the Scriptures, and none the less has right opinions and a true plan of life, he is absolutely blessed and truly possesses in himself the spirit of Christ.

The Jews [he says] are of a directly contrary way of thinking, for they hold that true opinions and a true plan of life are of no service in attaining blessedness, if their possessors have arrived at them by the light of reason only . . . that the natural light of reason can

teach nothing of any value concerning the true way of salvation . . . But there is no need to dwell on such persons. . . . If a man abounds in the fruits of the spirit . . . whether . . . taught by reason only or by the Scripture only, he has been in very truth taught by God and is altogether blessed.<sup>12</sup>

But at this point Christians lined up with the Jews against the surprised rationalist. He proves that death becomes less hurtful in proportion as we love God more.<sup>13</sup> He proves that to avenge wrongs with hatred is wretched; proves that one who strives to conquer hatred with love withstands many as easily as one, has little need of fortune's aid, and fights his battle with joy and confidence.<sup>14</sup> Some religionists object to his reliance on his reasoning, calling it a rationalistic arrogance. For example, take such a passage as this from his *Ethics*. "I do not think it worth while to prove separately all the properties of strength; much less need I show that he who is strong hates no man, is angry with no man, envies no man, is indignant with no man, despises no man, and least of all is proud. These propositions and all that relate to the true way of life and religion are easily proved from *Ethics* Book IV, propositions 37 and 46, namely that hatred should be overcome with love, and that every man should desire for others the good which he seeks for himself."<sup>15</sup> But we must remember that these latter propositions were not accepted on authority from Jesus. Spinoza had already proved them from previously proved propositions, in geometrical manner, resting the whole structure of proof at last on definitions and self-evident truths.

Christians as well as Jews objected to the implications of such procedure. If the highest injunctions of revealed religion are thus shown to be within the bounds of reason, people somehow felt that reason's support weakened these Christian truths and

that the unique glory of Christ was dimmed. Indeed, the very desire to prove the truth of Christ's assertions was regarded as disloyalty, and such a philosopher must be a dangerous atheist.

Accused of throwing off all religion, he replied in warm words of eloquent defense. Letter 49 is a reply to one author who made the charge.

I would ask whether a man throws off all religion, who maintains that God must be acknowledged as the highest good, and must, as such, be loved with a free mind? or, again, that the reward of virtue is virtue itself, while the punishment of folly and weakness is folly itself? or, lastly, that every man ought to love his neighbor and to obey the commands of the supreme power? Such doctrines I have not only expressly *stated*, but have also *demonstrated* by very solid reasoning.

But it was all in vain that Spinoza restated his realistic position. He was not enough a man of the world to understand that it was his high service that made him distrusted. The great thinker, thankful to God for his mind, never adequately understood that it was his very solid reasoning which itself offended: that immorality, bigotry, and selfish ambition could far more easily be forgiven him than those twelve arduous years of labor spent on his *Ethics*. What the popular theologians wanted was that he should have taken all moral truths on the simple word of Jesus Christ—or their own—and not have wasted his talents on vain demonstrations.

Men and movements are to be understood in terms of results; but also in terms of means and chosen goals. The direct result of this man's labors was that among the theologians of his time he was despised almost more than any man. In fact, the common mind has always grossly misunderstood him, and in exercising the cheap function of applying labels has almost invariably used wrong ones or printed them in false colors.

But some of the misunderstanding was so natural, and the fear of his methods was so well grounded, that it is surprising that so wise a man as Spinoza was surprised at their mistakes. He thought that agreement in purpose would furnish a sympathetic tie. He thought that since he aimed at the same great goals as the theologians, they would approve—that they would welcome consecrated efforts to establish on indestructible foundations the rightfulness of the great principles of religion.

The painful fact of our experience is that the ablest defenders of great goals are all-too-commonly regarded as their dangerous friends.<sup>16</sup> And it is frequently the fact, indeed, that the greatest men are poor judges of the actual consequences success would bring. Is it not perfectly clear that a generation after Jesus the Pharisees would have said that the fulfillment he gave the law was indistinguishable from its destruction?

To Spinoza the reason is the best part of man, and exercising it aright gives man his greatest joy and develops more and more of his real being into that nature which is fitted to endure eternally. He aimed his greatest powers, then, toward proving the basic truths of religion. The measure of his success was great enough to make it questionable whether revelation is necessary for securing the greatest certainty for the ultimate things of faith. He did not see that in proving their truth he weakened them for men in whom belittling reason is second nature and that by his rational proof of Christ's moral laws, for some people in this perverse world, he actually undermined them and minimized Christ.

#### 4. THE Surer ROAD TO BLESSEDNESS

Spinoza's main theme is salvation, true welfare.<sup>17</sup> What he sought was something beyond social and ethical reform and im-

proved methodology, though these were needed for that spiritual happiness which was his goal. Philosophy was a means of salvation. It had become for him what it was for the greater philosophers of ancient Greece—an advance beyond religion, a surer road to blessedness.

The immediate purpose of some of Spinoza's writings may somewhat obscure this major purpose and conception. For example, the purpose of the treatise on religion and politics was to show that freedom of thought and speech can safely be granted and that it cannot be denied without grave danger to piety and public peace. In that book he could say that faith aims at nothing but obedience and piety, while philosophy has no end save truth.<sup>18</sup> At first glance this is in conflict with what has already been given as his central conception of the role of philosophy. Statements from other books wear a different look, seeming to break down these proposed distinctions between the spheres of religion and philosophy. "The first and only foundation of virtue . . . is seeking one's own true interest."<sup>19</sup> "The greatest good is the knowledge of the union which the mind has with the whole of nature." "Self-approval is in reality the highest goal for which we can hope."<sup>20</sup> Man's highest happiness or blessedness consists alone in this—to perfect the understanding.<sup>21</sup>

These apparent discrepancies are totally absorbed in Spinoza's main conception. They become varying synonyms for one of the most sublime claims ever made for the richness of spiritual values which flow from knowledge of the truth. And the basic expression of his thought is that blessedness is nothing else than the contentment of spirit which arises from intuitive knowledge of God. That is the same great goal as reached in the *Ethics* by demonstrations. His finished *Ethics* and his unfinished

treatise on the *Improvement of the Understanding* are the elaboration of two different routes to the same blessedness, and both are among the great treasures of philosophy.

A passage taken from the treatise on the *Improvement of the Understanding* allows us to look into the heart of a man who calmly laid aside this world's prized possessions, because he knew that richer experience must await one who attains truer knowledge of God.

After experience had taught me that all the usual surroundings of social life are vain and futile . . . I finally resolved to enquire whether there might be . . . anything of which the discovery and attainment would enable me to enjoy continuous, supreme, and unending happiness. . . . I could see the benefits which are acquired through fame and riches. . . . I . . . debated whether it would not be possible to arrive at the new principle, or at any rate at certainty concerning its existence, without changing the conduct and usual plan of my life: with this end in view I made many efforts, but in vain. . . . When I saw that all the ordinary objects of desire would be obstacles in the way of a search for something different and new . . . I was forced to inquire which would prove the most useful to me; for . . . I seemed to be willingly losing hold on a sure good for the sake of something uncertain. . . . All the objects pursued by the multitude not only bring no remedy that tends to preserve our being, but even act as hindrances, causing the death not *seldom* of those who possess them, and *always* of those who are possessed by them. . . . But love for a thing eternal and infinite feeds the mind wholly with joy, and is itself unmingled with any sadness, wherefore it is greatly to be desired and sought for with all our strength . . . One thing was evident, namely, that while my mind was employed at these thoughts it turned away from its former objects of desire, and seriously considered the search for a new principle; this state of things was a great comfort to me, for I perceived that the evils were not such as to resist all remedies. Although these intervals were at first rare, and of very short duration, yet afterwards, as the true good became more and more discernible to me, they became more

frequent and lasting; especially after I recognized that the acquisition of wealth, sensual pleasure, or fame, is only a hindrance, so long as they are sought as ends, not means.<sup>22</sup>

The reader who goes on to the culmination of this passage which I have abbreviated somewhat, learns that the final goal, the source of unending happiness, is understanding the things of God by the fourth kind of knowledge, that is, by immediate perception—the mode of knowledge by which the adequate essence of a thing is apprehended without danger of error. One would not go astray in describing this as a prolonged mystical experience, in which self-evident truth is a source of rapture.

#### 5. THE ORGANIZING IDEAS OF SPINOZA

With the inner motive and the psychological outcome of this philosophy before us, we may begin to set the great rationalist's view of Christianity into his framework of ideas. The start of his thinking is with the principle of cause. Like most thoughtful men, he accepted without question the validity of the notion of cause and, in common with his age, thought of God as the cause of the world. "Everyone must surely admit that nothing can be or be conceived without God. All men agree that God is the one and only cause of all things; both of their essence and of their existence."<sup>23</sup> But over against the dualism of mind and matter, made so clear and popular by Descartes, Spinoza placed the thought of the unity of nature. As we all know, that principle has become a dominant concept in scientific thought and in the great philosophical tradition. The subsequent high warfare of mind has raged over whether mind or matter is the basic reality to which the other must be reduced or on which it must be regarded as somehow dependent.

Contrary to these common endeavors, Spinoza preserved full

rights for both the physical and the mental sciences without sacrificing the principle of unity. He did not reduce either to a position of dealing with an inferior subject matter; he rejected the view that mind is dependent on matter, equally rejecting the rival view that matter is dependent on mind. According to his view there is something more fundamental than the body which exists or the mind which thinks. But this more fundamental reality is not some "wholly other," to which thought and extension are totally alien. Mind and matter are both what Spinoza calls attributes of God, what some of us might now prefer to call manifestations of God.<sup>24</sup> It is not that God is basically something else; not that he is essentially *will* and *has* a mind and *has* a body. Nor is love the innermost being of God—or pure personality or anything else we know. "Will no more appertains to God than anything else in nature, but stands in the same relation to him as motion, rest, and the like."<sup>25</sup> Existence itself is the essence of God—I *am that I am*. And of God we can form no general idea. We do, indeed, form true ideas of God. We conceive his essence in two ways, as thought and as extension or, to use Aristotelian terms, as form and as matter. These are the two known attributes of God, and each is infinite. It is not, however, that God *has* an infinite body and also an infinite mind, as if God were a person or as if God, like a man, consisted of body and mind and were susceptible of passions. People understood Spinoza as meaning this, but he asserts that to take such a position is to stray far from the truth.<sup>26</sup> As we shall see below, God was for Spinoza identical with Nature, according to his own particular use of the term "Nature." And just as Spinoza would have said that personality exists in Nature, so he said that personality exists in God. But he did not think that Nature is a person, nor could he think that God is a



person. Neither is God moral or immoral, either. These, as we shall see, are judgments made from our own standpoints and do not hold of God.

Again, Spinoza has commonly been presented as a pantheist, "pantheism" meaning that all things are parts of God. This he says he has shown to be absurd, as absurd as to maintain that a solid is made up of surfaces, a surface composed of lines, or a line composed of points. A line is not a part of a surface, nor is a surface a part of a solid. No more is a thing a part of God. Any particular thing or any particular mind exists in God and can be conceived only through God. Or to use his own term, each thing is a mode or modification of God conceived under his attribute of extension. So is each mind a mode of the essence of God conceived as thought. God is thus conceived by us under these two attributes of thought and extension, each being a perception of the essence of God. Each of them gives us true ideas of God. But each is a particular, not a general, idea of God. Forming a general idea of God is beyond our intellectual powers, for each intellectual act can only particularize these two attributes under which we know God.

But while we cannot have a general idea of God or perceive his essence otherwise than under these two attributes, our powers do suffice to define what we mean by God. Spinoza says that he means by God a being absolutely infinite; that is, one who is not only infinite mind and infinite matter, but who consists of infinitely more attributes, each of which infinitely expresses his nature.<sup>27</sup> This may enable one to understand why the term "God-intoxicated" has been applied to Spinoza. And Professor Wolfson affirms that this God-intoxication is in fact only a hangover from an earlier religious jag.<sup>28</sup> Both statements are intelligible, but unconvincing. And even if the youthful

Spinoza did give up an excessive religiousness for rational philosophy, there is nothing in the writings of the great philosopher himself to suggest that Spinoza ever came to look on his early days in Judaism as being what a "religious jag" implies.

Is there anything wobbly or staggering about this reply to a direct question as to his idea of God? It is found in Letter 60 of the *Correspondence*.

To your question whether I have as clear an idea of God as I have of a triangle, I reply in the affirmative. But if you ask me whether I have as clear a mental image of God as I have of a triangle, I reply in the negative. For we are not able to imagine God, though we can understand him. . . . You must also observe that I do not assert that I thoroughly know God, but that I understand some of his attributes, not all nor the greater part; and it is evident that my ignorance of very many does not hinder the knowledge I have of some.

The identification of God with nature is often given as the basic principle with Spinoza. "God or Nature" is, indeed, a frequent expression with him. But it is permissible only when *his* meaning of nature is taken. Thus, some people seem to mean by nature a certain mass or corporeal body. In order easily to establish a rational theology and at the same time to cling to a supernatural aspect of the religious experience, people strip nature of mind. Or sometimes they exclude the human mind from nature. Others retain the supernatural easily by stripping our minds of some of their powers, insisting that certain of our most interesting and valuable experiences are supernatural. When such people formulate *their* views of nature and then say that Spinoza identifies God and nature, we need not wonder that he protested that such a supposition is wholly erroneous.<sup>29</sup>

Spinoza undertook to prove that Nature has no particular

goal in view and that final causes are real only as human figments.<sup>30</sup> It seemed to him that the doctrine of final causes does away with the perfection of God, for if God acts for an object, he necessarily desires something which he lacks. It is only in relation to our imagination that things can be called beautiful or deformed, ordered or confused.<sup>31</sup> We confer our characteristics on nature, which may have them only in so far as they are in us who are in nature. But just as validly other things might do the same. Thus, "if a triangle could speak, it would say that God is eminently triangular, while a circle would say that the divine nature is eminently circular."<sup>32</sup>

As we know, the great theologians have ordinarily maintained that God necessarily understands himself. This great rationalist might well maintain that theirs is a one-sided rationalism, emphasizing one aspect of mind at the expense of all the others. According to Spinoza, God *acts* by the same necessity as that by which he understands himself; in other words, as it follows from the necessity of the divine nature.<sup>33</sup> That is, "the reason or cause why God or Nature exists, and the reason why he acts, are one and the same. Therefore, as he does not exist for the sake of an end, so neither does he act for the sake of an end; of his existence and of his action there is neither beginning nor end."<sup>34</sup> "It is therefore as impossible for us to conceive him as not acting as to conceive him as non-existent."<sup>35</sup>

The farther consequences were relentlessly drawn; and it was this which alarmed the custodians of morals. For he saw and said that it is therefore only in a somewhat loose and improper or inaccurate manner of speaking that we can say that we sin against God or use the expression that we "offend God."<sup>36</sup> "For things could not have been brought into being by God in

any manner or in any order different from that which has in fact obtained." <sup>87</sup> For that, he argues, could have been, only if God's nature had been different. "Hence it follows solely from the perfection of God that God can never decree, or never could have decreed anything but what is; that he did not exist before his decrees, and would not exist without them." <sup>88</sup>

#### 6. THE VALUE OF SPINOZA'S IDEAS

With this brief statement of Spinoza's leading ideas before us, we may well pause to reflect on how differently men take a given theory or a given set of facts. The absence of any obvious difference in the way the sun rises on the evil and on the good leads one man to conclude that there is no God and leads another to infer that men, too, should be perfect in that same absolute way or that nations should treat the aggressor and the victim both alike. Belief in supralapsarian predestination is for one great thinker a double manifestation of the glory of God and for another an open invitation to a moral holiday, with God to blame for consequences. This is also true of the belief in the absolute determination of the events in nature. One man rages that the world is so horrible that any changes in this rotten set-up where we are compelled to experience life's fierce and real evils would only make things worse. Another speaks in evident gratitude for this best of all possible worlds. So with Spinoza's ideas of God and Nature! Regardless of how they appeal to us, we ought, in fairness, to take clear note of what his thinking did for him. This becomes clear in two passages which follow. They are taken from his reply to Blyenberg, a correspondent who set up for himself two rules in philosophical inquiries: conformity to reason and conformity to Scripture, with the second more important, as he said.

For my own part [replied Spinoza]<sup>39</sup> I plainly confess, and without circumlocution, that I do not understand the Scriptures, though I have spent some years upon them, and as I feel that when I have obtained a firm proof, I cannot fall into any state of doubt concerning it, I acquiesce entirely in what is commended to me by my understanding; without any suspicion that I am being deceived in the matter, or that Holy Scripture, though I do not search, could gainsay it.<sup>40</sup>

The second passage should never be forgotten by those who think that his basic positions are abundantly discredited because his inferences from them clash with the accepted theologies. He continues: "But if in any instance I found that a result obtained through my natural understanding was false, I should reckon myself fortunate, for I enjoy life, and try to spend it not in sorrow and sighing, but in peace, joy, and cheerfulness, ascending from time to time a step higher. Meanwhile I know (and this knowledge gives me the highest contentment and peace of mind) that all things come to pass by the power and unchangeable decree of a Being supremely perfect."

#### 7. AN EFFORT TO SAVE DEMOCRACY

Few books have been so violently opposed, so frequently refuted, and so little injured as Spinoza's *Treatise on Religion and Politics*. It was written because it seemed to him that even in Holland democratic government and religious freedom were increasingly endangered. His statement of the occasion of the book is noteworthy. "As I pondered over the facts that the light of reason is not only despised, but by many even execrated as a source of impiety, that human commentaries are accepted as divine records, that credulity is extolled as faith; as I marked the fierce controversies of philosophers raging in

the church and state, the source of bitter hatred and dissension, the ready instruments of sedition and other ills innumerable, I determined to examine the Bible afresh, in a careful, impartial, and unfettered spirit, making no assumptions concerning it, and attributing to it no doctrines which I do not clearly find therein set down."<sup>41</sup>

Spinoza states that in the whole course of his investigation he found nothing expressly taught by Scripture which does not agree with our understanding.<sup>42</sup> But unreasonable claims are often made for the sacredness of Scripture, making the words, the language, and the phrases sacred. For him the sacredness depends on our understanding of the doctrines taught in them. But many people, professing adoration for each letter and word of Scripture, only succeed in holding up the sacred writers to ridicule, as if they were not capable of writing a plain narrative, the meaning of which could be relied on. It is a pretty pety, he says, that accommodates the meaning of the *clear* passages to those that are *obscure*.

According to his views the Scriptures, as instruments of religion, speak in a way adapted to the received opinions of the masses, the purpose being, not to render men wise, but to make them obedient.<sup>43</sup> Thus theology, religion, and revelation, treated by him as almost synonymous, are indeed reasonable, in that they serve the same high purpose as may for some be accomplished by a true philosophy. And yet they are not subservient to reason; they are an independent and popular way of encouraging the right life and are thus to be attributed to courage and high-mindedness rather than to be classed with superstition. It seems to him that he is thus assigning as great authority to the Scriptures as do those who make exaggerated claims for them. And yet he cannot place the Scriptures above

reason. In spite of all his years with the Scriptures, he makes this remarkable statement: "As far as I am concerned, I have never learnt or been able to learn any of God's eternal attributes from Holy Scripture."<sup>44</sup> The preceding exposition of Spinoza's ideas will aid in making that statement intelligible, without treating the statement as due to his pious correspondent's overpraise of Scripture.

Nevertheless a high estimate of the worth of the Scriptures is frequently expressed. They are a true means of grace; their function is to stir up the heart of man to obey.<sup>45</sup> Faith does not demand that its doctrines be true, but that they be pious; and some doctrines without a shadow of truth in them may possibly make men obedient.<sup>46</sup> Religion was imparted to the early Hebrews as a law written down because they were at that time in the condition of children.<sup>47</sup> But children, too, are to be aided toward the good life. And it is a wise provision that laws be sanctioned by threats, that is, by prescribed penalties, because for the mass of mankind they are more powerful than is reason in restraining the emotions. So, while not *intrinsically* superior to philosophy, religion is, in actual fact, of greater social value; that is, it is of genuine worth to more people. Pastors of churches would do well to recognize that their justified function is to present the religious commands in such ways as to make them effective for the feeble intelligence of the masses.<sup>48</sup> And because belief in the Scriptures is necessary to the masses, whose intellects are not capable of perceiving things clearly and distinctly, it would be gross unkindness to the common people to undermine their belief in the Scriptures. That was the chief reason why he blocked every attempt to publish a Dutch translation of his treatise, with its withering in-

dictment of superstitious bibliolatry. His work was a learned argument, never intended for every man. He saw that the actual utility of the Bible was very great. It brings consolation to mankind. It meets man's need for a revelation. Without it we might not know the truth that simple obedience is the path of salvation for most men, for this fact is not open to the light of natural reason.

Scripture does not deprive reason of its independent rights, however, and reason does not become a subservient menial for faith. The undoubted merit of Scripture does not dictate to reason how it must study the sacred books. Spinoza observes that the prophets were endowed with unusually vivid imaginations rather than with unusually perfect minds.<sup>40</sup> He notes that prophecies varied according to the imagination and physical temperament of the prophet and, more importantly, according to his particular opinions. Thus, prophecy never renders the prophet wiser than he was before. Study of the prophetic books shows "that God has no particular style in speaking, but according to the learning and capacity of the prophet is cultivated, compressed, severe, untutored, prolix, or obscure."<sup>40</sup>

Many people have asserted that a supernatural faculty is required for interpreting Scripture. On this important matter Spinoza has an argument of great interest. He says that if we look at the interpretations offered by people who have claimed such supernatural faculties, we shall see that they contain nothing but the merest conjectures. Let them be placed side by side with the interpretations of those who humbly confess that they have no faculty beyond their natural ones. "We shall see that the two are just alike,—both human, both long pondered over, both laboriously invented." The men who boast of



possessing supernatural intelligence teach no doctrines but the commonplaces of those Gentile philosophers whom these "supernaturalists" stigmatize as blind.

If one inquires what these mysteries lurking in the Scriptures may be, one is confronted with nothing but the reflections of Plato or Aristotle, or the like, which it would often be easier for an ignorant man to dream, than for the most accomplished scholar to wrest out of the Bible.<sup>51</sup>

It is idle, then, to introduce as supernatural what can as easily be comprehended in nature; and whether by reason or by obedience to laws taken on faith, whatever we desire and do insofar as it is caused by our knowledge of God should be set down to sound religion.

#### 8. IMPORTANT BELIEFS OF CHRISTIANITY

To Spinoza, the great rationalist, religion is a matter of acts and desires as well as the holding of beliefs. And yet beliefs are regarded as of profound importance and are to be rigidly examined with a view to ascertaining how they will affect life. The following passage, somewhat abbreviated, gives his judgment as to the beliefs central to an acceptable religion.

To the universal religion belong only such dogmas as are absolutely required in order to attain obedience to God. . . . As for the rest, each man, seeing that he is the best judge of his own character, should adopt whatever he thinks best adapted to strengthen his love of justice. If this were so, I think there would be no further occasion for controversies in the church.

I have now no further fear in enumerating the dogmas of universal faith, or the fundamental doctrines of the whole of Scripture, inasmuch as they all tend . . . to this one doctrine, namely, that there exists a God . . . who loves justice and charity, and who must be obeyed by whosoever would be saved; and that the worship of

God consists in the practice of justice and love toward one's neighbor . . .

That He is One . . .

That all things are open to Him . . .

That He has supreme and just dominion over all things, and that He does nothing of compulsion, but of his absolute fiat and grace. . . .

That all those and only those who obey God by their manner of life are saved . . .

Lastly, that God forgives the sins of those who repent. No one is free from sin, so that without this belief all would despair of salvation, and there would be no reason for believing in the mercy of God. He who firmly believes that God, out of the mercy and grace with which He directs all things, forgives the sins of men, and who feels his love kindled thereby, he, I say, does really know Christ according to the Spirit, and Christ is in him.

If one of these precepts be disregarded, obedience is destroyed. But as to what God, or the Exemplar of the true life, may be, whether fire, or spirit, or light, or thought . . . this, I say, has nothing to do with faith, any more than has the question how He came to be the Exemplar of the true life; whether it is because he has a just and merciful mind, or because all things exist and act through him, and consequently that we understand through him, and through him see what is truly just and good. Every one may think on such questions as he likes.

Furthermore, faith is not affected, whether we hold that God is omnipresent essentially or potentially; that he directs all things by absolute fiat, or by the necessity of his nature; that he dictates laws like a prince, or that he sets them forth as eternal truths; that man obeys him by virtue of free-will or by virtue of the necessity of the divine decree; lastly, that the reward of the good and the punishment of the evil is natural or supernatural; these and all such like questions have no bearing on faith; except in so far as they are used as means to give us license to sin more, or to obey God less. I will go further and maintain that every man is bound to adapt these dogmas to his own way of thinking, and to interpret them as he feels that he can give them his fullest and most unhesitating

assent, so that he may the more easily obey God with his whole heart.<sup>52</sup>

### 9. WAS SPINOZA REALLY A CHRISTIAN?

Did this greatest of modern Jews, banned forever from Judaism, become at last a Christian? Was it right that his remains finally found rest within a Christian Church? As one answers these questions, one gives the deepest judgment of what it means to be a Christian. And it is here, also, that in some final sense, one judges not only the strange Jew in his lonely garret, but God, Christ, and oneself.

It is worthy of note that in his creed for a universal religion, Spinoza makes use of Christ in describing God's grace and mercy in the forgiveness of sins. We need not be told that this relation of Jesus Christ to God and our salvation has long been the focal point of vital Christian faith. In a later chapter we shall give it specific and extended treatment. But as we examine several of Spinoza's passages bearing on this theme, we should remind ourselves that knowing the things of God by knowledge of the fourth kind was the culminating secret of his unfinished *Treatise* and that it is for him the true blessedness. This should be kept in mind when we are told by sceptical critics that such passages as I now quote are merely Spinoza's ingratiating courtesies to Christian friends. It must at least be acknowledged that Spinoza seems to believe in Christ as the one who supremely exemplifies the highest form of life.

I combine several passages giving his view of Christ.

A man who can by pure intuition comprehend ideas which are neither contained in nor deducible from the foundations of our natural knowledge must necessarily possess a mind far superior to those of his fellow men, nor do I believe that any have been so en-

dowed save Christ. To him the ordinances of God leading men to salvation were revealed directly without words or visions. . . . The voice of Christ may be called the voice of God, and it may be said that the Wisdom of God, that is, wisdom more than human, took upon itself in Christ human nature, and that Christ was the way of salvation. I must at this juncture declare that those doctrines which certain churches put forward concerning Christ, I neither affirm nor deny, for I freely confess that I do not understand them. What I have just stated I gather from Scripture, where I never read that God appeared to Christ, but that God was revealed to the Apostles through Christ . . .<sup>53</sup>

Two other passages follow, the last written to Oldenburg, secretary of the Royal Society in London and Spinoza's most constant correspondent.

Justice and charity are the one sure sign of the true catholic faith, and the true fruits of the Holy Spirit. Wherever they are found, there in truth is Christ; wherever they are absent, Christ is absent also. For only by the spirit of Christ can we be led to the love of justice and charity.<sup>54</sup>

Lastly . . . I will tell you that I do not think it necessary to salvation to know Christ according to the flesh; but with regard to the Eternal Son of God, that is the Eternal Wisdom of God, which has manifested itself in all things, and especially in the human mind, and above all in Jesus Christ, the case is far otherwise. For without this no one can come to a state of blessedness, inasmuch as it alone teaches what is true or false, good or evil. . . . This I think will be sufficient explanation of my opinions . . . Whether it will be satisfactory to Christians, you will know better than I.<sup>55</sup>

The difference between essential Christianity and its current expressions was much in Spinoza's mind. He gently assured his simple landlady that she need not change her religion; that she was in a church which could offer her salvation. But he made sharp thrusts at organizations which promoted superstition; which pretended monopoly on God's grace; or which

called ridiculous errors mysteries.<sup>56</sup> He realized clearly enough that his ideas of God were different than those of most Christians, but he seems to have believed that he agreed with Paul, and with the ancient Hebrews, and with most philosophers. In this connection it is interesting to remember Santayana's saying, that of the great European philosophers only Spinoza and the ancient naturalists are right on the central issue, the relation of man and his spirit to the universe.<sup>57</sup>

Spinoza's explanation of the central reasons for this observed discrepancy between current Christianity and the worthy article we of today still can read as a personal message from the great rationalist. It is a sobering message. It takes on, for most of us, something of the nature of a personal indictment, and few of us will be able, after looking deeply into our own hearts, to say "Not guilty."

I have often wondered [he says] that persons . . . professing the Christian religion, namely, love, joy, peace, temperance, and charity to all men, should quarrel with such rancorous animosity, and display towards one another such bitter hatred that this, rather than the virtues they claim, is the readiest criterion of their faith.

Inquiry into the cause of this anomaly leads me unhesitatingly to ascribe it to the fact that the ministries of the church are regarded by the masses as dignities, her offices as posts of emolument—in short, popular religion may be summed up as respect for ecclesiastics.

The spread of this misconception inflamed every worthless fellow with an intense desire to enter holy orders, and thus the love of diffusing God's religion degenerated into sordid avarice and ambition. Every church became a theater, where orators, not church teachers, harangued, caring not to instruct the people, but striving to attract admiration, to bring opponents to public scorn, and to preach only novelties and paradoxes, such as would tickle the ears of their congregation. This state of things stirred up an amount

of controversy, envy and hatred, which no lapse of time could appease; so that we can scarcely wonder that of the old religion nothing survives but its outward forms . . . and that faith has become a mere compound of credulity and prejudice . . . prejudice . . . carefully fostered for the purpose of extinguishing the last spark of reason! Piety, great God! and religion are become a tissue of ridiculous mysteries; men who flatly despise reason, who reject and turn away from understanding as naturally corrupt, these . . . of all men, are thought, O lie most horrible! to possess light from on high. . . . If they had but one spark of the light from on high, they would not insolently rave, but would learn to worship God more wisely; and would be as marked among their fellows for mercy as they now are for malice; if they were concerned for their opponents' souls, instead of for their own reputations, they would no longer fiercely persecute, but rather be filled with pity and compassion.<sup>58</sup>

## VII. Leibniz: the Great Individualist

*One of the best uses of true philosophy, and particularly of physics, is to nourish piety and to lead us to God.—Leibniz, Journal des Savants, 1697*

LEIBNIZ was creative in many fields. He says that in mathematics we have to rely on genius; in physics, on experiment; in law, human and divine, on authority; in history, on testimony.<sup>1</sup> His knowledge reached into these worlds of thought. He declared that "knowledge is the source of the highest pleasures of the mind"<sup>2</sup> and that "the wiser one is the happier he is."<sup>3</sup> If Spinoza better proved those statements true, Leibniz at least deserves credit for saying them well.

The first great German philosopher wrote his earliest treatise on *The Principle of Individuation*. He was occupied throughout life with the content of that concept, and he reached the final conclusion that existence consists of a multitude of individual beings or substances which he called "monads," each of which expresses or mirrors the whole universe in its own unique way. The essence of substance is activity: each monad is a force, and each is free because self-dependent. Together these monads constitute one completely harmonious unity, the best of all possible worlds. While Leibniz was the great individualist among philosophers, he also believed in unity. His system undertook to reconcile this emphasis on the reality of the individual with the scientific views which accepted a gen-

uine unity of being. His philosophy is that of an inveterate mediator.

Leibniz was not a metaphysical pluralist in any ultimate sense. He held to a unity of being as genuine as Spinoza's, only for him the principle of unity was spiritual, not some unknown neutral entity. He can thus be regarded as one of the founders of modern idealism. He initiated the first great reaction against the new mechanical science, with its rejection of final causes and of rational explanations. He insisted that holding to the validity of physical causes does not necessitate the rejection of teleology. Perhaps no principle is closer to the heart of his thought than this: everywhere both physical and final causes are equally present and equally efficacious.

Leibniz never rejects the efficacy of physical causes. "Whatever is performed in the body of man, and of every animal, is no less mechanical than what is performed in a watch. The difference is only such as ought to be between a machine of divine invention and the workmanship of such a limited artist as man is."<sup>4</sup> The technique for investigating nature requires the use of reason and the application of mathematics rather than appeal to the imagination. But many in his day were forgetting that sound rule. "It is men's misfortune to grow, at last, out of conceit with reason itself, and to be weary of light. Chimeras begin to appear again, and they are pleasing because they have something in them that is wonderful. What has happened in *poetry*, happens also in the *philosophical world*."<sup>5</sup>

The mechanical determination of events has no exclusive validity, however. Every fact which occurs is susceptible also of a rational or purposive explanation. Leibniz might therefore have fittingly been called the great teleologist. Many other labels might have been applied. He shares with Newton the



discovery of infinitesimal calculus. He supplemented Locke by showing that empirical knowledge does not consist merely of a collection of sensations, but that there is also an intellect which collects them.<sup>6</sup> He anticipated many of the greatest steps in mathematical logic. He showed how the sciences need metaphysical foundations: "how men by a sort of necessity make use of metaphysical terms, and flatter themselves that they understand what they have learned to say."<sup>7</sup> He was himself honest and acute enough to admit that "the philosophers of our century recognize in nature a multitude of mysteries."<sup>8</sup>

Other facts about Leibniz will give more adequate appreciation of his place among the founders of modern philosophy. He stood almost alone in thinking of reality as displayed in history. "It was reserved to him, with a genius almost two centuries in advance of his times, to penetrate the meaning of the previous development of reflective thought."<sup>9</sup> It was Leibniz who revived appreciation of Plato's idealism; who introduced the idea of development into modern philosophy;<sup>10</sup> and who first assigned to philosophy its enduring task of mediating between knowledge and faith. He did much to restore faith in the competence of the mind to attack and to solve the eternal problems, thus giving to German speculation its optimistic tone.<sup>11</sup> By insisting that the life of the soul transcends all that is clear and distinctly conscious, he initiated modern work on the subconscious. In his use of organic concepts and in emphasizing the living unity of the psychical life, he influenced subsequent thinkers to depend more on biology and its concepts than on mathematics and physics.<sup>12</sup>

Many contemporary philosophers are deeply indebted to Leibniz. John Dewey's first book shows that indebtedness, and his second book was a commentary on Leibniz's *New Essays*.

At the end of his chapter on the "Theology of Leibniz" the word "instrumental" is used repeatedly. One of Bertrand Russell's early works, recently republished, was a critical study of the philosophy of Leibniz. Many of his other works bear traces of impressive contact with the great individualist. Russell's presidential address to the Aristotelian Society, "On the Notion of Cause,"<sup>13</sup> develops an argument for determination both by mechanism and by purpose, which can be taken as Leibniz *redivivus*. Again, some of the most memorable features of Russell's *Analysis of Mind* are clearly reminiscent of Leibniz.<sup>14</sup> Whitehead also is vitally indebted to Leibniz. In fact he has recently indicated his judgment that Leibniz is the greatest of all modern philosophers. My own expectation is that we shall yet witness some comparable influence exerted by him on modern religious thought. He has much to contribute toward making "the religion of the wise the religion of the masses."

#### I. THE AGE AND THE MAN

Leibniz was born into an age perhaps more teeming with ideas than any since Athens was great.<sup>15</sup> The young man thrilled to opening horizons. When a book came into his hands, he looked for what he could learn from it, not for what he could criticize.<sup>16</sup> Taking ideas from opposite regions of the intellectual world and laboring to harmonize them, he produced a wealth of ideas, of view-points, of fertile suggestions, and of actual discoveries, perhaps unequaled in the history of thought.<sup>17</sup>

Leibniz could never be limited to a single loyalty. He acknowledged the eminent merit of Descartes, as anyone with penetration was compelled to do;<sup>18</sup> but found that those who esteemed him alone would never amount to much and would

be deprived of true knowledge of the heart of things.<sup>10</sup> He impressed his acquaintances as thinking it all-important to develop his mind.<sup>20</sup> He turned everywhere for light, and found it in the most diverse quarters. He pondered the ancients; and weighed the scholastics; and became secretary of a fraternity of alchemists. He expressed an almost infinite respect for a tradition of the Roman Catholic Church; but felt that passion for opinions already held should be subject to a greater love of truth. His dependence on Descartes was supplemented by the influence of Hobbes and Huyghens.<sup>21</sup> He enthusiastically accepted much from Locke, and he never quite escaped from Spinoza's spell, much as he attacked the great Jew. He is said to have found in Plato his view that substance is essentially active force; but it almost requires genius to escape finding it in the first of Genesis. The one certain thing is that tracing back this man's mental biography would lead to many worlds. The intensity of his universalism made his reaction a powerful movement.

Then, when he was near the age of forty, there came insights and demonstrations and the main outlines of a system which changed no more. He says that he found what satisfied him and that he "arrived at demonstrations regarding matters which did not seem capable of demonstration."<sup>22</sup> He became hopeful that his demonstrations would "change the face of philosophy," which hitherto generally consisted of empty words.<sup>23</sup> He began to refer to his philosophy as the system of pre-established harmony.

The philosophy of Leibniz is an attempt, by means of a new view of substance, to solve the riddle left by Descartes's dualism of two substances, mind and matter, each conceived of as incapable of influencing the other. With clearness of percep-

tion taken as the test of truth, theories of interaction between the substances must be regarded as false, since no method can be conceived whereby cross causation between mind and matter could be achieved. Yet to the reflecting consciousness as such, nothing is more immediately obvious than that each of Descartes's two substances does appear to do the inconceivable.

According to Leibniz nature is completely continuous and all change in nature is a continuous unfolding, all phases of each individual's experience being always infinitesimally present and maturing in the unique sequence which characterizes each individual. He formulated the doctrine that little unconscious sensations and perceptions determine conscious sensations and choice. From the side of technical organization his system centers in the principle of the Identity of Indiscernibles, and the law of sufficient reason,<sup>24</sup> which Russell finds are deduced from the more basic principle that every true proposition is analytic—that is, "that every necessary or contingent predicate, every past, present, or future predicate, is involved in the concept of the subject," in case the propositions are true.<sup>25</sup>

A most interesting volume will be written if some future theologian with access to a really adequate edition of the writings of Leibniz carries through this definition of truth and shows how the various views presented in the religious thought of Leibniz are deduced from his concept of God. There will be less glib talk then about his dizzy system building, and more recognition that the great individualist was not mistaken in declaring that he had ideas and observations of profound religious and theological significance:—and for the same reason as given by Bertrand Russell for holding him of very great importance for philosophy. In both fields the genius of Leibniz took a few principles which most philosophers would grant,

and from them he demonstrated conclusions which the same men would scorn as extravagant fantasies.<sup>26</sup> But the present author must be excused from expounding here the total philosophical system of the most versatile modern thinker. There can be no hope of making intelligible in a paragraph what most authors cannot adequately portray in a volume. But this point may properly be emphasized: if Leibniz did cling to mutually incompatible ideas and thus make his conceived universe logically impossible, it need not be taken as proof of his incompetence in logic. It may equally well show that he was both a scientific and a religious thinker, enduring tension between rival loyalties and unwilling to make all values bow to logic.

## 2. THE DISLIKE OF LEIBNIZ

No chapter in philosophy makes less appeal to American students than the one on Leibniz. This is not primarily because Americans react against the egoism which pervades German philosophy. Calling him the great individualist is not to condemn him for begetting a cult of superman. He should not be confused with the later Germans who seemed, one after another, to deduce the whole universe from some one phase of man's nature. It is true Leibniz was accustomed to value his own opinions highly.<sup>27</sup> He manifests that tenacity of opinion often noticed in persons of great intellectual ability. But no one should regard him as contemptibly confident of being right.

It is difficult for many readers to overcome an initial dislike of Leibniz. He shows himself so expert in verbal trickery that one doubts his sincerity. His declarations of anxiety to learn seem to conceal conceit. His charging other philosophers with using literary tricks for gaining favor rebounds against himself;

he shows a suspicious familiarity with the practice. He suspects Berkeley of publishing his paradoxes through desire for notoriety.<sup>28</sup> Spinoza is described as a subtle and profane author, putting forth intellectual monstrosities<sup>29</sup> and concealing his pernicious doctrine by adopting religious terminology which was mere trapping to deceive the people.<sup>30</sup> Descartes is charged with having preferred applause to certainty, though making much pretense of the latter.<sup>31</sup> Leibniz likewise charged Descartes with using artifices to conceal his indebtedness to others;<sup>32</sup> with taking frequent care not to speak plainly;<sup>33</sup> and with adroit use of pretexts.<sup>34</sup> One of these attacks has particular interest today. From his paper "On the Philosophy of Descartes" I quote several sentences.

. . . But I fear that we are deceived by fine words, for the God, or Perfect Being, of Descartes is not a God such as we imagine him and such as we desire: that is to say, just and wise, doing everything for the good of his creatures as far as possible, but rather he is . . . the principle of things. The God of Descartes has neither *will nor understanding* . . . I am astonished at the ease with which the world is deceived, if one can merely play adroitly with agreeable words, although their meaning is corrupted; for just as hypocrites abuse piety, heretics the scriptures, and the seditious the word liberty, so the Cartesians have abused those grand words "the existence of God" and "the immortality of the soul." Unravel this mystery . . . and . . . the immortality of the soul is worth no more than his God. . . . It is no use and can in no way console us.<sup>35</sup>

Strangely, the fame of Leibniz suffers also from his bluntness. He repeatedly declared that grave contemporary disputes were basically nothing but disputes about words. "The controversy on predestination proceeds from misunderstanding, and I have convinced many clever men on it."<sup>36</sup> He urged all men "to destroy the silly phantom which divides the Protestant par-

ties."<sup>37</sup> The common reaction to this blunt audacity of Leibniz is seen in the first letter from Arnauld, the famous French theologian to whom Leibniz sent a brief of his *Discourse on Metaphysics*. "In his thoughts," says Arnauld to their mutual friend Count Ernest, "I find so many things which frightened me, and which if I am not mistaken, almost all men would find so startling that I cannot see any utility in a treatise which would be evidently rejected by everybody."<sup>38</sup> To the confusion of his wrangling contemporaries Leibniz was forever looking beneath the labels and finding substantial agreement between those who thought themselves in total opposition. "I am persuaded," he wrote regarding Catholic and Protestant Christians, "that the differences, when they are examined to their foundations, are for the most part composed of abuses."<sup>39</sup>

His few published writings were called out by current discussions; they were highly occasional in character and took extremely controversial form. Great imaginative effort is required to read them, and they become fully intelligible only with the texts of other authors constantly at hand—where they almost never are. Furthermore, much of the material is in letters, which we cannot easily regard as weighty. His work was never that of the professional philosopher. He rejected the offer of a chair of philosophy, as if convinced that in philosophy and science, even as in theology and religious statesmanship, the layman is freer from prejudice than is the professional and more likely to aid in progress toward the truth.<sup>40</sup> He thought himself concerned with greater matters than putting philosophy into books. It is consequently somewhat hard to find any particular document which clearly assures his fame.

Perhaps in part because of the controversy between adherents of Newton and those of Leibniz as to the credit for the dis-

covery of calculus, some incidents have been selected and others twisted to portray the German as double-faced. From reading some materials about him one might lightly conclude that he was an intellectual drudge for rich rulers, content to be a living encyclopedia admiringly consulted by German princesses and willing, in order to find favor with the mighty, to stab Spinoza in the back. Even Bertrand Russell, acclaiming the greatness of Leibniz as logician and metaphysician, finds it easy to damn him as a man.<sup>41</sup>

### 3. THE CATHOLIC CRITICISM OF LEIBNIZ

English opinion of Leibniz was permanently influenced by C. W. Russell, who translated and published in 1850 an untitled and unfinished writing of Leibniz, giving it the title *System of Theology*. The document was apparently drawn up in connection with the discussion of reunion between the Roman Catholic and the Protestant churches, which was being secretly considered by representative leaders on both sides. Taking great care to prevent recognition of his own party affiliations, Leibniz prepared this attempted compromise to ascertain if the stated views would be tolerated by the spokesmen for Catholicism. His statement treats the matters in bitterest dispute between the great churches and was almost certainly a gifted thinker's sincere attempt to reach a common faith. It contains material of profound value, which ought to be newly circulated as an abiding contribution to the psychology of worship. But the document was never finished and was never used as planned, because the drift of events canceled all hope of success through the group for which it was prepared.

The English translator selects passages from this document to show that Leibniz concedes the essential Roman Catholic



claims and that he was consequently a Catholic at heart. Later, in discharge of his official duties as advisor for the German prince who claimed the British throne, Leibniz wrote: "Our sole right to the British Crown rests upon the exclusion and detestation of the Roman religion." Russell thus impugns the character of Leibniz, implying that he changed his words and sacrificed his religious convictions for unworthy motives.<sup>42</sup>

The compromise document, acceptable enough to the Catholics to establish him as sound with them, amazed the Protestants when it was discovered years later. Some cried down "another papist forgery" and some furiously attacked the man who dared propose so many concessions to Rome; so when the Catholics later launched their attacks, the dead philosopher had no friends. Caught in the hot cross-fire of religious controversy, the moral reputation of Leibniz was shot to pieces by Catholics and left undefended by Protestants. That was a philosopher's reward for the intellectual labor expended in the effort to bring peace to the church of Christ!

The argument against the integrity of Leibniz no longer seems convincing. Critics of his role in the reunion effort must take more account of the fact that he thought when he first entered the secret discussion that the Catholic participants had been authorized to promise that the infallibility of the Council of Trent would be waived.<sup>43</sup> Taking this as showing the good faith of the Catholic Church and believing the opportunity of centuries was at hand, Leibniz went very far toward conceding the infallibility of the church and toward admitting that it was practically, for most of the time, fixed in the pope.

But the negotiations afforded ample reasons for Leibniz to alter his tone toward Rome. It is not necessary to accuse him of unworthy motives. A genuine interest in Christian reunion

explains equally well his altered attitude. His Catholic correspondents, the Landgrave Ernest, Pelisson, and Bossuet, insisted that the infallibility of Trent could not be waived. That which Leibniz insisted had been promised was withdrawn, making it apparent to him that Rome was unable or unwilling to make actual concessions for peace. The friendly correspondence initiated to solve Europe's most urgent problem degenerated into an effort on the part of his Catholic friends merely to gain Leibniz as another distinguished convert to Rome. Seeing what stood in the way of real success, men of unquestioned probity of character might have been forced to some detestation of Roman religion.

But to make Leibniz *Roman* Catholic is seriously to misrepresent him even in his mood for the most generous concessions for peace. Arnauld wrote to Count Ernest about the effort to win Leibniz for Catholicism: "Your highness brought him to recognize that there was no reasonable doubt as to its being the true church." On the margin of that letter, written in the hand of Leibniz, are these telling words: "I have never endorsed this sentiment."<sup>44</sup> At another time he said emphatically, "The church, however, is not authorized of God to lay claim to an absolute obedience."<sup>45</sup> Notice how at the crucial point in the following passage the essential "we think" is retained, how even in the vaunted "Catholic phase" of Leibniz his Protestantism is not surrendered. "So also we are to obey the Sovereign Pontiff, as the only visible Vicar of God upon earth, in all things which, *after due self-examination, we think* can be done without sin and with a safe conscience . . . and this we are bound to do for the love of the unity of the church."<sup>46</sup> The italics are mine.

Further reply to critics can be found in a plea to Count

Ernest, who appears to have been more than piqued at the failure of his efforts to persuade his friend Leibniz to follow him into the Roman Catholic Church. The irritation and disappointment of Ernest found expression in the *Trifolium*, in which Leibniz was caricatured. I quote from the reply by Leibniz—a librarian writing to a prince.

I humbly beg Your Highness not to allow your *Trifolium* to go further in those things which concern me; nor to accuse me of indifference, of which I in no way approve; I do not understand also on what grounds you impute to me a sort of idolatry in respect of the interests of the House of Brunswick; those whom I serve I serve faithfully, but I have never had the meanness to approve of injustice in the way that I seem to be charged.<sup>47</sup>

An earlier letter should be placed beside this. It is written to the same prince, commenting on the positions taken by one of the leading French theologians, Arnauld. It is also interesting for the insight it gives into the motives of Leibniz in submitting a digest of his *Metaphysics* to a leading Catholic. And it goes far toward justifying the changed attitude of Leibniz toward the Roman church.

The most important reflection which I have made in the enclosed is that he himself [Arnaud] some time ago expressly wrote to your Serene Highness that no trouble was given to a man who was in their church or who wished to be in it, for his philosophical opinions, and here he is now, forgetting this moderation, and losing control of himself over a trifle. It is therefore dangerous to consort with such people and your Serene Highness sees how many precautions one should take. This was one of the very reasons why I communicated the summary to M. Arnaud; to probe a little and to see what his reaction would be. . . . As soon as one swings away the least amount from the positions of certain professors they burst forth into explosions and thunders.<sup>48</sup>

## 4. WAS LEIBNIZ A RELIGIOUS THINKER?

An announcement of the forthcoming complete edition of Leibniz's important writings gives seven divisions in which they fall, with several headings under many divisions. Not one word indicates any writings on religion. Haldane's article for the *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* gives not the slightest hint that Leibniz had written significantly about religion. Philosophers generally appear to think that his long concern with religion was the performance of routine duties as advisor to the Hanover Court and that personally he was quite indifferent—competent and willing to compose a system of theology to suit any occasion or any employer.

In thus trying to claim Leibniz wholly for philosophy, contemporary writers do not enhance the prestige of their subject. Instead, they damage the reputation of their colleague. Furthermore, they ignore numerous statements which support the view that "at the age of fifty, Leibniz had pledged his life to religion"<sup>49</sup> and had definitely projected a massive defense of Christianity. In describing the course of his own life he had said, "I have changed and changed again according as new light came to me."<sup>50</sup> Elsewhere he put it unforgettably: "I began a philosopher but I finished a theologian."<sup>51</sup>

Accepting this viewpoint would throw many facts into new significance. He stated definitely that his purpose to promote piety caused him to perfect himself in mathematics. He had noticed that the religious controversialists were little listened to if they did not know the recently popularized modes of mathematical philosophy. He noticed how amply Arnauld had established the doctrine of the "real presence" from the perpetual tradition of the ancient authorities, but how ineffective

it proved because infidels and atheists were left in position to reply "impossible" or "contradictory." That weapon could be taken from them only by some logic stronger than the appeal to tradition.<sup>52</sup>

Notes made by Leibniz on his copy of one of Pascal's papers prove the great influence which the latter's mathematical genius and religious experience exerted on the life of Leibniz. Of especial importance are the notations made at the point where Pascal treats of the two infinities and views man as located between the infinitely small and the infinitely great. Leibniz applies this idea, not to man alone, as Pascal did, but to all individual substances.<sup>53</sup>

Changes and comments made by Leibniz as he copies Pascal are of deep interest. At one point Pascal had written, "Behold our true condition; it is this which restricts our minds to certain limits which we cannot pass," and Leibniz adds "here below." At another time he had written in similar vein, "Thought is the principal and perpetual function of the soul. We shall always think, but we shall not always live here. . . . We are destined to live some day a spiritual life, where substances separated from matter will occupy us much more than do our bodies."<sup>54</sup>

This man supposedly not interested in religion gives an added religious turn to Pascal. Furthermore, this interesting document has erasures, repetitions, omissions, and more comment. At one point Leibniz writes, "That which he goes on to say about the double infinity is only an entry into my system." The entire page is covered with written evidence that it had been carefully considered and that he had been greatly stimulated by it. At one point is written in German words, "What is added by me on the margin, I have written better on another

paper." Baruzzi, to whom I am indebted for information about this document, finds that the page shows signs of physical haste and of a kind of comprehending spiritual passion; that Leibniz was here stirred to deep levels when he met Pascal's mind.<sup>55</sup>

There is good evidence that this was no incidental contact with a creative religious philosopher. Leibniz once assured Arnauld that he had "anxiously sought out, and read with the utmost attention, every distinguished antagonist of Christianity and all its most eminent defenders."<sup>56</sup> He adds that the study had only served to strengthen his convictions of the truth of Christianity. It would seem that he was particularly impressed with passages in which the more religious side of these eminent writers is presented. In a letter to Morell, October 1, 1697, he wrote in this vein.

The Kingdom of God comes, however, without our prayers and without our cares, as Luther has excellently said in his little catechism for children. But we have part in the blessedness of the Kingdom in the measure that we have had part by good thoughts and by good deeds. For the world is a perfect city under God, who is the King, and the laws there are regulated according to the most perfect reason.<sup>57</sup>

Out of his intensive and protracted study of religion, there came new insights into what the representatives of Rome were doing and what the probable historic consequences would be.

I see no way of excusing those who ruled this Council (Trent) from the reproach of having dared to pronounce an anathema against the doctrine of the whole ancient church. I am much mistaken if that will ever be tolerated unless by a strange revolution we revert to savagery, or by a divine judgment something worse than ignorance should rule in the church; for, I confess, the truth seems very clear on this point. It is tolerable if Trent and Rome made a mistake, but

they must erase the anathemas, which are the most curious things in the world, on a matter where it seems impossible for those who are not prejudiced to be able to give conscientious acquiescence.<sup>58</sup>

Those plain and stinging words were addressed by Leibniz to Bossuet, foremost spokesman for Roman Catholicism, and trusted adviser of the most powerful ruler in the world.

It is an odd spectacle presented in current philosophy. One of the world's greatest thinkers in mathematics, psychology, and physics says repeatedly that religion is of supreme importance; that consequently he had studied it profoundly and had achieved results comparable with anything he did in the sciences. He pails himself with Pascal in thought about religion—with a supreme religious genius—and vows that there are ways in which he himself has the more to contribute toward establishing the truths of the Christian religion. But the philosophical stereotype has such unchallenged vogue that the *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* ignores religion in treating Leibniz. Clearly the time has come when some competent historian and philosopher should start to do for Leibniz what others began to do for Spinoza fifty years ago.

Whatever its technical structure, the very essence of his philosophy is the harmony between reason and religion, between natural and revealed theology. Thus, he could infer that a natural theology imported from China would basically coincide with the theology revealed in the Christian religion, which was the supernatural divine gift to Europe. They are rays of light from the same ultimate source which was none other than that being than whom nothing better can be conceived. If his *good* philosophy was the outcome of his logic, as Bertrand Russell argues, that does not alter the fact stated by Leibniz himself—that piety was its motive.

Few expressions are found oftener in his correspondence, Jordan assures us, than the hope that science and religion would join hands—or, what is the same thing in other words, that furthering the glory of God and promoting human welfare are according to any adequate understanding synonymous expressions. Leibniz seemed to find value in making the double statement of the goal of Christian effort. This kind of statement is many times repeated.

To love God is nothing else than to comprehend the glory of God, and augment it as far as we can. For the general good is not only analogous to, but is identical with the glory of God; God being himself the source of the universal harmony, is himself the universal good. Consequently to make humanity an harmonious work is to continue the work of God, to increase his glory and render it more and more present to the heart of man.<sup>60</sup>

Why does the tradition of a religiously indifferent Leibniz still persist? In part because theologians have not grasped the basic soundness of his method and because his religious correspondence has been little read. In part, also, because they have wanted some *special* content for revealed religion, something not available also through use of reason. But perhaps the philosophers are more responsible. In general they claim him for philosophy alone. Their procedure is another lamentable inheritance from that nineteenth-century clash between philosophy and theology in Germany, pointed out by Merz. It is the inverse parallel of barring Schleiermacher from standing as a philosopher because he was the great theologian.

It is especially odd that Bertrand Russell should be so sharply critical of Leibniz, as if the latter's effort for church reunion (one of the chief areas where he used what Russell calls his *bad* philosophy) was motivated by desire for cheap popularity,



for unworthy fame, and for the pretty plaudits of royal women.

Some of Bertrand Russell's colleagues in contemporary philosophy have lamented his own series of popular books which have attempted to broaden the base of scientific advance. Are these works, as some of his disappointed admirers regard them, a mere squandering of the gifts of genius which might have been developing greater refinements of minute analysis or extending the farthest frontiers of knowledge? Others will think that it was sound judgment which prompted Mr. Russell's efforts to popularize the scientific attitude; that scientific advance is threatened unless its social base is broadened.

But why then should Bertrand Russell manifest such acerbity toward Leibniz for his attempts to solve the most urgent public problems of his dangerous day? Because he wasted the time of genius that might have been given to elaborating further anticipations of symbolic logic? Leibniz himself might well have replied, "That is Mr. Russell's comparison of values, not my own." Although Mr. Russell may regard it as bad philosophy, Leibniz was concerned with Christianity because he thought Jesus Christ was "the divine founder of the most pure and refined religion";<sup>60</sup> because he thought it a revelation of the same divine truth available in scientific knowledge: because he believed Jesus had in fact "accomplished what many philosophers had vainly sought to do,—to make the religion of the wise the religion of the masses." It is a judgment from his knowledge of history, made possible by his profound insight into the most powerful motivations of thought and conduct. "The first object of our Saviour has been rather to sanctify men's wills than to clarify their minds on unknown truths."<sup>61</sup>

Professor Whitehead names Leibniz as one of the two greatest thinkers in all of history, and Professor Dewey has called him the greatest intellectual genius since Aristotle.<sup>62</sup> Carr maintains that Leibniz, more than any other philosopher, has given forceful expression to the proper principle and method and finds that he advanced against Sir Isaac Newton theories of time and space which, now verified in modern observations, have compelled radical revision of physical theories.<sup>63</sup> With every added testimony to the mental stature of this German thinker, it becomes more and more scandalous that no one has really undertaken to rehabilitate his reputation as a man. Of course philosophers ought not distort facts to protect a colleague. But neither ought they rest content with interpretations which needlessly indict a great thinker's moral character; which give a man like Leibniz the status of a ready liar or which treat his many years of devoted labors as the indifferent service of a hired man.

This task of character reclamation is not foredoomed to failure. The direction of effort has already been indicated. It must break with the traditional interpretation of Leibniz as radically as does Bertrand Russell, but in quite the opposite direction. The radical heresy I propose is to accept the fact that he was the son of a pious mother; that he actually meant his statements of pious purposes even though he repeated them to princes; that his persistent endeavors to influence rulers was sound practical philosophy and proves his sincerity rather than impugns it; that his lifelong efforts at church reunion were prompted by real religious interest rather than by the strategical considerations of a paid diplomat; that he was in fact deeply attached to Christianity and derived from it both his basic conceptions and his most enduring motives.

## 5. THE UNWRITTEN APOLOGETICS

Leibniz points out that he had concerned himself with religious thinking more than Pascal had, and he gives detailed reasons for thinking that his projected work on religion would do more than Pascal's genius had done to verify Christian truths.

I would dare to say [he writes] that what I have had the good fortune to discover in . . . science is not greater than some meditations which I have had on religion, and that my meditations are the fruit of an application greater and longer continued than that which M. Pascal has given to those matters related to theology: for he has not studied history nor jurisprudence with as much care as I have done, and now the one and now the other is required to establish certain truths of the Christian religion. It is true that his extraordinary genius has supplied something; but often application and information are as necessary as genius. . . .

Finally, if God gives me for some time health and life, I hope that he will also give me enough of leisure and of freedom of spirit, for me to express my views, acquired in more than thirty years, in order to contribute to piety and instruction, on the most important matter of all.<sup>64</sup>

It is in such a context that we may place his emphatic word quoted by Baruzzi. "I have vowed that if one could do something of this nature for the general good of Christendom . . . one would have very well spent his life."<sup>65</sup>

His system would certainly have shown the public man's recognition of life's practical realities. He clearly realized the great importance of influencing the men who are going to be influential. That would be his defense for depending so much, in his plans for promoting missions, on the support of rulers. "For the spirit of one such man, when he is Czar, or monarch of China, to win and direct him towards the true good, to fill

him with zeal for the glory of God and the perfection of men, is worth more than the winning of a hundred battles, for on the will of such people depend many millions of other people."<sup>66</sup> To be able to render this great service, Leibniz applied himself to intense study, thinking it of the highest importance that religion should not be perfunctorily defended.<sup>67</sup>

But were those projected demonstrations of the truth of Christianity allowed to remain merely as a contemplated dream? Are we correct in thinking that his "Apologetics" was left quite unwritten, while the would-be apologist allowed himself to be swamped by routine detail?

It has been forcefully argued by Baruzzi that much of the extant work of Leibniz was intended for his projected "Apologetics." The *System of Theology* should be regarded as a fragment of this greater work, and many of the other writings can be assigned their places. A manuscript discovered in Hanover discloses the planned work in some detail. The prolegomena would treat the elements of philosophy, that is, the principles of logic, mathematics, physics, and practical philosophy. The first main sections would be of six chapters each on the existence of God and immortality of the soul; then a demonstration of the possibility of the mysteries of the Christian religion; and a fourth would establish the authority of the church.

Baruzzi thinks that much which Leibniz wrote is clearly related to the chapter titles named for his proposed demonstrations—the mode of the eternal, of omniscience, of omnipotence, of the multi-presence of God; the possibility and necessity of the Trinity; the possibility of transsubstantiation, and so forth. Leibniz himself calls his published *Theodicee* a herald of the general philosophy and natural theology he wished to estab-

lish. Many other works apparently produced as occasional writing thus take on new significance. In his written plan Leibniz announced chapters on the love of God. Baruzzi asks what is the correspondence on the reunion of the churches except a great theory of the love of God? And finally the beatific vision and the universal harmony, are they not his essential metaphysics? No passage is more significant for understanding him and his world than one in which Leibniz identifies beatific vision, intuition of God, and contemplation of the universal harmony, since God is nothing other than the harmony of things or the principle of loveliness in things.<sup>68</sup> In a different place he says, "Between the universal harmony and the glory of God there is no more difference than between body and shadow, person and picture."<sup>69</sup>

Baruzzi argues that Leibniz's plans were more far-reaching than for a reunion of the Christian churches; that his thought was directed toward the establishment of a universal church; to the religious organization of all mankind. "His action became universal because his thought received the imprint of universality. . . . Never has a person to so high a degree joined action to thought; never have a life and a system more strongly expressed each other."<sup>70</sup> It is true that

the universal church he endeavored to found on the law of love was never objectified. . . . How could such a work have been accomplished in the seventeenth century? Would it be an advantage at any time? Has the very question a meaning? But the work *was* realized. It was true for him who conceived it. And the effort of Leibniz will not be lost for those who contemplate his work and re-create it in themselves . . .<sup>71</sup>

## 6. LEIBNIZ AND CHRISTIAN MISSIONS

In his treatment of Leibniz and the China-Mission, Merkel shows the intense and long-continued interest which the great

German thinker had in missions. In a letter of 1697 Leibniz wrote, "I judge that this mission is the greatest affair of our times, as well for the glory of God and the propagation of the Christian religion as for the general good of man."<sup>72</sup> At another time he wrote critically of the neglect of missions by the English and Dutch:

I can scarcely pardon . . . their neglect. But they will pay dearly: others will avail themselves of the opportunity they neglect, for were they truly wise they would procure at once the advancement of the glory of God and the good of their state. I find every day, more than one can easily believe, that nothing is so imprudent as irreligion, and nothing so conformed to our interest here below as true piety.<sup>73</sup>

In a letter of October 1, 1697, about his *Novissima sinica*, he states, "My purpose is to arouse our race to work for the propagation of the true faith among distant peoples."<sup>74</sup>

In his discussion of the founding of the Prussian Academy of Sciences, Harnack tells of the effects upon Leibniz of his acquaintance with Grimaldi, who had returned from the Jesuit mission to China. "All which he could hear of the land he collected, established himself in enduring relationship with the Jesuit missionaries, encouraged the learning of the Chinese language, was incessantly concerned to promote an expedition to China," and finally established the Prussian Academy for that purpose and projected a society in Moscow to open up China, to exchange the culture of China and Europe, and to acquaint the huge land with Christianity.<sup>75</sup> The official announcements of the Prussian Academy frequently set forth that it should serve the forthplanting of the pure Christian faith, and the charter itself stressed this missionary purpose. This stands in the constitution:

Since experience shows that true faith, Christian morals, and real Christianity cannot be better advanced, alike within Christendom

and among distant unconverted nations . . . than by men such as, besides being of pure and blameless life, are equipped with understanding and knowledge, we will that our Society of Sciences shall charge itself with the propagation of the true faith and Christian virtue.<sup>76</sup>

German scholars of the highest competence refuse to consider this language as religious veneer. "From the ideal of Science for Science's sake he was far removed. All knowledge was for him a means of the knowledge of God, and of furthering the divine purpose in the world." Such testimony as this from Ernst Troeltsch is not easily set aside.<sup>77</sup>

In thinking about proper method in the actual missionary's work, Leibniz arrived at interesting conclusions as to suitable technique.<sup>78</sup>

I know that it is necessary to go by degrees when one tries to persuade men, and that it is not easy to convince of the truth of the Christian religion men to whom our sacred and profane history is not sufficiently known and demonstrated. Now the goodness of God is so great that even those to whom the revelation is not presented are aided with another kind of grace, which is never lacking so long as good will does not fail in themselves; for, aroused by contemplation of nature, and inwardly aided from on high, they can love above all, him whom they conceive, in beauty and in perfection superior to all, until finally their souls having been so prepared, God sends them the light of faith. It is necessary then to strive to arouse in the heart the love of God, on which the Saviour has always insisted, and which reason itself recommends. But it is certain, on the other side, that a person cannot be loved if his beauty remains always veiled to our view, and that the power and the wisdom which disclose to our eyes the beauty of the supreme intelligence, so far as that is in our capacity, can never be better revealed than by the knowledge of the wonders which are his work.

It is true that Leibniz saw in Protestant missions in America and in Asia a means of strengthening European Protestantism in the face of the more powerful Catholicism. But certainly the

awareness of such a political bearing of his project is no proof that the religious interest was feigned. "He saw in the activity of a mission furthering science, in the propagation of faith through the sciences, a furtherance of the glory of God, the highest world purpose."<sup>70</sup> His friend, the Princess Sophia, had remarked on his plans, expressing the view which perennially crops up against missions: "It would be a fine enterprise to send missionaries to the Indies. But it seems to me we might first make good Christians in Germany, without going so far to do it."<sup>80</sup> Undeterred by such cool scepticism, Leibniz pursued his plans with eager tenacity, encouraged by his information about the success of Eliot's work in America and by continuing reports from China.

Many of his letters testify to the depth of his interest in missions, and the language often becomes passionate. "This mission appears to me so important for the good of the faith and of the human race, that I am extremely interested and often think on what it could accomplish."<sup>81</sup> The great philosopher, aware of the vast significance of the mission project, wrote to his friends in words like those used by our contemporaries who proposed "the evangelization of the world in this generation." "China stands open to the gospel."<sup>82</sup> This is not the voice of Mott in the pre-war days of the twentieth century: it was the call of Leibniz in the sixteen-nineties. "Good God, what a harvest then for the evangelical workers if Christianity is once well established in China."<sup>83</sup>

Listen, again, to this recruiting appeal: it is not from an itinerant secretary of the Student Volunteer Movement, but from one of the world's greatest thinkers.

For what can be more glorious than to carry the light of truth to distant nations, across the seas, and through fire and sword; to know no traffic but in the salvation of souls alone . . . and not be deterred,



even by the fear of pestilence, from these offices of prodigal charity. The man who knows not, or despises, these things, has but a plebeian and vulgar conception of virtue; he foolishly limits man's obligations to God by the perfunctory discharge of every-day duties, and by that cold habit of life, without zeal, without spirit, by which men's minds are commonly regulated.<sup>84</sup>

But missions was not conceived by Leibniz as a one-way charity. It is clear that he thought Europe might directly profit from acquaintance with China. He asked

whether there were nut-bearing plants which might be brought to all the Christian countries of Europe; whether there were proven medicines which might be brought back; which Chinese books, especially historical and natural-historical, might be worth translating into Latin; what key to the Chinese language might be available.<sup>85</sup>

But it was not alone in economic goods that he thought Europe might be enriched by the helpful reciprocity of missions. He was, according to Harnack, genuinely convinced that a scientific enlightenment of the heathen must lead them to the pure Christian religion.<sup>86</sup> But he was also impressed with profoundly interesting parallels between Chinese and Christian thought. "Might not one say that the *Li* of the Chinese is the sovereign substance which we adore under the name, God?"<sup>87</sup> He had clearly broken with the shallow judgment that the virtues of the heathen were gilded vices,—that all their knowledge of God was vain fascination and darkness.<sup>88</sup>

When he surveyed religious conditions in Europe, especially in his beloved Germany, it almost seemed to him at times that the greatest promise of raising the life level in Europe was through some contact with Chinese culture.

As often as I think of the perilous condition of affairs and of our present lethargy and false purposes, I am ashamed of our position in the eyes of posterity. . . . We quarrel over little things; we are

indifferent to great things; so that it is almost irksome to meditate on the history of the present time.<sup>80</sup>

Since so many futile attempts have been made by arms, by wrangling and by gentle methods, which have always proved a failure, the matter has seemed hopeless to many people, as if the hand of God alone and the passage of time could bring a remedy.<sup>80</sup>

Germany has been inundated with blood, not to speak of other countries in Europe; the murders, acts of arson, pillaging, sacrilege, violence and other frightful evils have been innumerable, but the greatest evil has been the loss of so many souls, purchased by the blood of Christ, as a result of these disturbances.<sup>81</sup>

In view of the vast collapse of ethics in Europe, it appears almost necessary for the Chinese to send missionaries to us, who might instruct us in the exercise of natural theology.<sup>82</sup>

With Europe in such perplexity and ethical chaos, Leibniz thought benefits might be derived from an intimate contact with the thought of China, where there were "Marks of a cult of the one sovereign God, and some traces of the true revealed religion."<sup>83</sup>

## 7. LEIBNIZ AS STUDENT OF CHRISTIANITY

According to Leibniz, the wisest theologians held that the Christian religion consists alone in charity and the love of God. He gives a list of Catholic theologians who support his own thesis that "there is no article of revelation which is absolutely necessary, and . . . a person may thus be saved in all religions, provided only he loves God truly above all things."<sup>84</sup> But the actions of Christians commonly proved their actual unbelief. "I am very much afraid," he wrote, "that most persons are only very little convinced of the truth of their religion; otherwise they would act in a different manner, and they would not treat matters of salvation so bluntly."<sup>85</sup>

The religious situation in Germany was complicated by cross conflicts between political, ethical, and religious interests. The Socinians, judged by ethical standards, were Christians of the highest type; but they, thinking of God in strongly anthropomorphic fashion, denied the divinity of Christ because he was held to be a different human being.<sup>96</sup> The zealously moral Anabaptists prohibited pious Christians from holding public office and from military service, adopting a policy which seemed to Leibniz calculated to upturn human society and to throw government into the hands of the most abandoned members of society.<sup>97</sup> Orthodox theologians defined their doctrines in terms which justified the bitter sarcasm of the Arabian philosopher who said that he had heard nothing more silly than the Christian religion, which commanded that its God should be eaten.<sup>98</sup>

For this moral chaos and abounding ignorance and for the grave dangers in the situation, Leibniz thought the leaders of the church much to blame, because they gave the stronger emphasis to the lower side of Christian thought and worship. Nor can we regard the imperfect information on this point, arising from the negligence of their teachers, as free from positive danger. . . . In exciting the soul to increased fervour in acknowledging the divine wisdom, justice, and goodness, as they are manifested in Christ, the consideration of his humanity is more efficacious than that of all other creatures beside, yet it should hold the place of but a step, and not the highest and crowning point, in the worship of God. And yet this is a fault into which we commonly see preachers and writers fall, rather laboring in their words or writing to inflame the devotion of the people, by pandering to the imagination and to a certain sensual affection of the carnal mind, than seeking to inculcate the adoration of the invisible Deity, which consists "in spirit and in truth," and is the last and highest object of our worship.<sup>99</sup>

Leibniz found it more difficult to hold his high idea of Christianity when he surveyed it as practiced by its adherents than when he considered the attacks made by its foes. Some Christians identified their religion with unsound theology; some made it consist of austerities which had nothing to do with piety; some connected it with ceremonies which encouraged superstition. He was acquainted with the varying attitudes of Christian sects and segments of the church. He was acquainted equally with the varying attitudes of government. It was easy to discern possibilities of the state's proposing or requiring action more truly Christian than that advocated by church leaders who tried to identify God with a power they controlled. So, even at the very time of greatest activity in behalf of church reunion, Leibniz insisted that God has given to the church no right to demand an absolute obedience. His advocacy of church union was not a disguised quest for power.

All the union efforts failed, and Leibniz died ignored, though he was the glory of his fatherland. Then, as in a later time, the attitude of Germany toward its famous sons justified his bitter cry, "Germany is the only country in the world that does not know how to recognize the fame of its children and to make that fame immortal."<sup>100</sup> He was called by his neighbors, *Löve-nichts*, corrupted from *glaube nichts*, believer of nothing, and he was buried as an atheist. In his later years he went to church little, heard few sermons, and for many years did not commune. One recent author maintains that "he refused to attend church because he was deeply religious";<sup>101</sup> that the pettiness of the orthodoxies, the black passions of a cultivated ignorance, the narrowness of the sermons, the substitution of theatrical techniques for religious sincerity too deeply wounded his spirit.

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He had something of the mystic's independence of the "usual means of grace."

The final word from the great individualist must be a parting message to Christian preachers. It comes from the greatest mind devoted to Church reunion, one perhaps as well informed about the churches as any we can find.<sup>102</sup>

There is no temple more worthy of God than a pure mind, no music sweeter than a fervent prayer . . . yet we are not to overlook external things because they are less to be prized than internal: in the same way as our innate reason directs us to respect and honour friends and princes not only by real service and by acts, but also by words, by gestures, and by every indication of love and honour.<sup>103</sup>

This thinker, charged with letting reason run to wild excesses, recognized that in religion, which is for the benefit of men as they are, we have need of appealing to the senses.

For everyone who seriously considers the nature of our mind as it exists in the body will easily admit that, although we can form within the mind ideas of things which are outside the sphere of sense, yet we are unable . . . to fix our thoughts upon them and to dwell on them with attention, unless there be super-added to the internal idea certain sensible signs such as words, characters, representations, likenesses, examples, associations, or effects.<sup>104</sup>

That passage and others which follow have significant implications for Christian worship. It may be that this is the point at which Leibniz made his greatest contribution toward that appreciation of other views which appears increasingly the indispensable foundation for any hopeful approach toward church union.

Whatever leads the mind most effectually to the consideration of God's goodness and greatness . . . whatever produces pious thoughts, nay, whatever renders devotion sweet and pleasing, all this is de-

serving approval. . . . Hence I am of opinion that God does not disregard as unworthy of his service the use of musical instruments, nor vocal harmony, nor beautiful hymns, nor sacred eloquence, nor lights, nor incense, nor precious vestments, jewelled vases or other offerings; nor statues, nor graven images of pious objects, nor the laws of architecture and perspective, nor public processions, the chiming of bells, the strewing of streets with carpets, and the other expedients which the overflowing piety of the people has devised for the Divine honour. . . .

We should gratefully acknowledge as a great gift from God the arts of painting and sculpture, through whose aid we obtain enduring images representing the objects with the utmost accuracy, vividness, and beauty. . . . I do not see what evil there can be in bowing down before an image of the crucifix and, while we look upon it, honour Him whom it represents; whereas, on the other hand, its advantages are manifest, inasmuch as it is certain that it has a wondrous effect in exciting affection . . . I admit . . . that in the present dispositions of many Protestants . . . much offense arises from the use of images; but, on the other hand, it must be considered what tumults and scandals, what rivers of blood, would be necessary in order to eliminate this usage from the church, which in itself and apart from abuses and scandals on both sides is a most excellent and praiseworthy one.<sup>105</sup>

One last message from the great individualist can be taken by each preacher into some session when his closet door is shut.

From a scribe or printer we look for clean and elegant paper, enduring ink, letters distinct, well-turned, and flowing with a certain appearance of ease; but we do not desire figured paper, particoloured inks, and fantastic mazes of idle flourishes. . . . It is the same in sacred things. . . . If the speaker betray excessive labour; if the hearers be carried away rather to admire his purity of diction, his elegance of gesture, and his erudition than to love God, to confess their sins, and to amend their life; if it be the orator rather than Christ, that is presented to the mind . . . all this is to corrupt sincere devotion by profane ornaments.<sup>106</sup>

God has placed us in the world to act according to his will, not to make harangues and give him compliments. I esteem truly pious those who have great sentiments of the wisdom of God, and who have zeal in doing good, conforming to his will as far as in their power. Nothing serves better as solid devotion than the true philosophy which makes known and admired the marvels of God . . . for how can one love God and glorify him without knowing beauty? But the end of all is the practice of moral virtues for the public good, or what is the same thing, for the glory of God.<sup>107</sup>

We ought to take care of affairs with a superiority of mind which directs things toward the great end, that is to say, to the glory of God, always with full content with that which God has ordered for the present and for the past, and with an ardent desire to contribute to what one judges conformed to his will for the future. . . . Well for men to talk of the love of God; but I see, by the effects, that few men truly have it, even those who are plunged deepest into mysticism. The touchstone of the love of God is that Saint John has given, and one who has a veritable ardor for the general good . . . is not far from the love of God.<sup>108</sup>

## VIII. Philosophers and a Common Faith

*Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant. . . . Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are diversities of ministrations, and the same Lord. And there are diversities of workings, but the same God, who worketh all things in all.—I Corinthians 12*

BEFORE DEVELOPING the chief conclusions from our hours with the philosophers some incidental observations may be of interest. In our crisis-shaken world, where the "eternal verities" are placidly ignored and our most confident certainties are boldly rejected, there may be some encouragement and comfort in recalling that these men lived in times when almost every area of life was torn by intense and bitter strife.<sup>1</sup> It is clear that conflicting ideas, held by men of convictions, brought on the tumultuous age in which modern philosophy arose and that thought was both a cause and a result of political clash, of social upheaval, and of religious strife. We may not be able to declare confidently the exact extent to which each is cause and each effect, but it is entirely clear that the great outburst of reflective thinking did not come in placid times.

Another observation of some importance is that not one of these great philosophers was married. It was not because they were awkward, unattractive, and socially incompetent. More



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than one provincial charmer appeared anxious to become Madame Descartes, while Pascal became almost a vogue with feminine nobility. The woman dearest to Pascal's heart, however, he persuaded instead to enter a convent and become Christ's bride. There is conclusive evidence, also, that Hobbes was not a social failure; and the stories about a young Spinoza worsted in rivalry for his teacher's daughter hardly stand a careful study of the dates involved. Regarding Leibniz, we know that he did in fact one time propose marriage, but thought better of it and withdrew the offer while the lady was making up her mind.

This is not the place, of course, for an examination of celibacy, for none of our thinkers were pledged to an unmarried state. There was nothing in the philosophic tradition to dictate that the philosopher should not marry, and these men could not have been imposed upon by the apocryphal rumors of a Socrates kept in torment by Xanthippe's sharp tongue. Nor is there anything to indicate that Paul's reasoning against marriage influenced these thinkers to avoid matrimony. Yet Paul's treatment of the subject in I Corinthians may afford a realistic hint toward the likely explanation. For Paul argued that the married man would have unnecessary tribulation; that his loyalty would be divided between his wife and his Lord; and that he might even find it expedient or necessary to take undue care for things of the world instead of thinking only how to please the Lord and to attend upon him without distraction. Like the great apostle, the great philosophers wanted no divided loyalty.

Humbling as it may be to professional pride, we must admit in the next place that the great founders of modern philosophy were not professors. There were chairs of philosophy in

the existing universities, and their learned occupants were highly honored throughout Europe. When students asked urgent questions, wise professors who knew their books gave the answers passed on to them by other professors. The schools, as usual, were full of faithful pedants, awed by that priceless heritage with the custody of which they had been duly charged. The important questions had already been asked, and the answers of the wise were in the books.

More than one of our founders of modern philosophy was invited to take an academic chair, but not one of them accepted. None of the men treated in our studies ever became a professor. The birth of modern philosophy was not at all a matter of professorships and schools. It came rather from an enhanced sense of the dignity of reason which somehow breathed through the intellectual world, unhindered by academic walls. It was born of refusal to accept a heritage of thought unexamined, however authoritatively certified by other men's labors. It manifested itself in an amazingly fresh reliance upon the worth of individual thought.

One might almost say that the founders of modern philosophy took as their chief text that saying about Jesus, "He shut the book, and sat down." Spurning the lazy reliance on what other men have said, that common excuse for failure to think, Hobbes said, "If I had read as much as other men, I would have been as ignorant as they."<sup>2</sup> Descartes is typical of them all in his sharp break with current learning. "I resolved," he says, "no longer to study any other science than that which I could find in myself, or in the great book of the world." "I completely abandoned the study of books as soon as my age permitted me to leave the subordinate position of a scholar."<sup>3</sup>

We professorial experts in schoolroom knowledge have often

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succeeded admirably in making students content with that subordinate position against which Descartes's whole mind rebelled. It may seem gross betrayal of a great profession to write along these lines, but our institutions of higher learning still steadily administer huge quantities of intellectual opiates. We are so industriously distributing the preferred answers that much of our teaching really closes minds, instead of opening them to the inadequacies of traditional answers.

In conversation with the principal of the ranking theological institution in India, I learned that college graduates and non-college men study together there in theological courses and that the faculty find that perhaps on the whole the non-college men are the abler students. Fifteen years' experience in an American theological seminary enables me to understand that astounding observation. With college graduates and non-college men working side by side under my instruction, I have yet to teach a class in which the ablest student in the group was a college graduate. Frequent contact with my professional colleagues of other institutions convinces me that this experience is not unique in the United States. It may, perhaps, indicate that our superior college men are not going on to theological seminaries at all and that our seminary-trained religious leaders are being recruited chiefly from among college men of inferior power. It may be, however, that too many college graduates have been afflicted with incipient nausea from undigested loads of learning; or, worse yet, that their nicely organized systems of tested knowledge have left no place for that *mysterium tremendum* on which religion flourishes or even for the awe in which it begins.

In the opening of the seventeenth century the call to first-hand thought seemed suddenly to ring across Europe. Tremendously stimulated by Descartes's teaching that thought is the

defining essence of mind, the age almost leaped to a heightened emphasis upon the dignity of knowledge. Especially outside the universities men began to think that it is thought which most distinguishes men from the rest of the animal creation. They began really to believe that reason is a spark of the very mind of the true God. Beside the fourfold first commandment to love God with all our heart and soul and mind and strength, these men felt themselves divinely commissioned to *know*. To grow in knowledge became a religious obligation assuming many forms. They were called to grow in that knowledge of ourselves which is wisdom; to acquire that knowledge of our world which is power; to discover that knowledge of the truth which makes men free; and to seek that knowledge of God which is life eternal. Their virtue, their praise, and their highest joy was to think on these things. So they shut their books. And instead of accumulating more of the answers of the learned, they took the lead in a great outburst of thinking. But they did not remake the world from professorial chairs.

#### I. A MODEST CONCLUSION REQUIRED

Men holding extremely diverse philosophies have been considered in the foregoing pages. Some chose one or another of Descartes's two substances as basic and carried forward the development of materialism and idealism. Some denied the dualism in behalf of other alternatives. They took the leading parts in waging the great dispute between rationalism and empiricism; between monism and pluralism. They furnished philosophic support to the rival claimants of political and religious authority. Each of these thinkers chose some viewpoint which made great appeal, and made impressive contribution toward its development and support.

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No concluding summary could possibly do justice to the varied philosophical systems they formulated. The reader is fairly warned that there is before him no massive constructive philosophical effort in which previous masters of thought are fitted into a final philosophy. A naïve beginner might think it simple to take some point of view from which these different philosophies could be judged, reshaped, and harmonized and would believe that such a philosophy of philosophies would afford that rational foundation for religion which so many believers desire. Of course every really philosophical history of philosophy must attempt some such task. Its performance requires a separate book, however, and it would be quite amiss to begin it in concluding these studies of how religion stood among philosophers. And simple honesty requires, further, admission that the author lacks the imaginative genius and the speculative power required even to begin this most pretentious work. Experience shows, too, that anyone who sets himself that goal will almost certainly produce only another philosophy rather than the comprehensive masterpiece desired.

Of course I do not mean to disparage that persistent, extended, and comprehensive intellectual effort which we call philosophy. Such an attempt could have no other result than to discredit the author among all competent thinkers, even though it gained him notoriety or popular favor by supporting that facile minimizing of philosophy toward which popular thinking so steadily inclines. There is for men with minds no justification for a cheap acceptance of dubious knowledge or for remaining contented with known incompleteness. But the obvious excuse for a present refusal to go farther into technical philosophy is that these studies have not laid the appropriate foundations. They have been concerned, not with the

philosophies of philosophers, but with personal religion and with their views of Christ. And though some academic philosophers may therefore dismiss the book as of no consequence—or even scorn it as superficial homiletics—our final concern must be with observations, not about a common philosophy, but about philosophers and a common faith.

## 2. VALUE DEMANDS RESTRICTION

Behind the author's unwillingness to undertake what may seem to some readers to be an obligation, there is also a realization that the actual philosophies displayed in history have a richness and uniqueness of value which it is vain to expect from one inclusive system. One might as well expect in one composition the simultaneous realization of those unique values which the trained listener gets from hearing six masterpieces of music. In its own way a philosophy also is a work of art. It, too, is the constructive elaboration of some view or insight chosen from among rival possibilities. And most of us find that our minds are more strongly gripped by thought-systems based on selected emphases than by any constructive effort which secures formal unity by sacrificing richness of meaning. Aesop's fable of the monkey and the nuts is as true for the philosopher and the theologian as for the ambitious monkey who reached into a glass jar and grasped a great handful of nuts. In order to enjoy the taste of any of the nuts he had to drop all the others and be satisfied with pulling them out one at a time.

The fullest realization of certain values necessitates limitation, just as the most vivid sensations require focus and contrast. The attempt to universalize them, however well it may serve as a guide to effort, seems destined to sure failure unless human nature undergoes astounding change. Some relations

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must be restricted in order to make possible the values which make them precious. Thus sexual promiscuity could not secure an actual universalizing of the values which mark true love; a love which is love for everyone must lack something of quality and depth. Similarly, the confinement of brotherhood to a limited number was a necessary precondition for the acquiring of that richness of value which made brotherhood a term fit for describing the goal of Christian effort. Thus a false psychology may mark efforts at universalizing a religion, just as a false history and an unworthy quest for power may stain the quest of Christian union. The very attainment of success may reveal more important failure. Disastrous loss of value may inhere in any achievement of unity by means of an overplay of bare intellect.

Some readers may find this truth so obvious that it need scarcely be mentioned. It seems to me, however, that adherents of religion, and theologians in particular, have often failed to grasp the truth, and that much effort has been wasted in trying to attain a unity, or even a uniformity, which is likely to be barren when won. There is here, of course, no denial of the fact that much loss and waste have resulted for religion, and for Christianity in particular, from a multiplicity sometimes springing from the inability to draw distinctions between first and added things or from an unwillingness to admit levels of importance in the things of God. But when all proper allowance has once been made for the fact that mere multiplicity may itself be barren, this other truth must be kept in mind, accompanying and safeguarding every movement for Christian unity, every striving for a common faith. In all kinds of intellectual treatment of the actualities of experience, eagerness

to bring everything into one synthesis may lead to the loss of values and even to the sacrifice of intelligibility itself.

This barren intellectualizing is in part responsible for the falsification of Christian history which is in itself an actual handicap for union efforts. For many centuries the church has persistently presented an idealized picture of a glorious company of Apostles to whom was committed a unified faith, a common purpose, and an accepted creed. Today this conception plays an important part in preventing a genuine fellowship among the Christian churches. Among many Christians desirous of communion with all who bear Christ's name, there is an uneasy, half-conscious conviction that intimate fellowship with those who phrase their faith in other ways is partial disloyalty to church and Christ; that if transcending creedal lines is a necessity of our present world, it is nevertheless a kind of forced, humanitarian betrayal of that legacy of faith to which in earlier times the whole church was true.

There have been, indeed, many times when Christianity was a tremendously vital force in human life; when it gave stimulation and re-enforcement for human endeavor in many realms; when its vigor was to be reckoned with in every phase of human thought and in every social plan. But there has been no time when all its vitality ran true to one creed or when all its living faith was formed in one mold. There is, it is true, an imaginative sense in which there is one great church of Jesus Christ which spans the centuries and which crosses every sea. But endeavors to determine membership in that mystical entity breed jurisdictional disputes and result in obvious disagreements. It might be maintained with much justice that the Spirit which guides the Christian movement has from the beginning



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prized diversity. It is clear, indeed, that only a religion whose rich diversity exceeded the intellectual grasp of any one mind could have made simultaneous appeal to thinkers as far apart as were those six great founders who remade philosophy three centuries ago.

### 3. DIVERSITIES—BUT THE SAME LORD

In philosophy, as in religion, vitality seems paired with variety; both become most alert and intense with the awareness of a rival or in the presence of a foe. The actual diversity which has appeared in our material was in a way only incidental to our main purpose, but it need not be repeated here at length. It must suffice to say that whatever the defining question the result is much the same. God was thought material, spiritual, or a neutral substance of an infinite number of infinite attributes. His relationship to nature was that of an original transcendent Creator, immanent purpose, substantial identity, external cause, or the principle of nature's pre-established harmony. For one thinker the essential characteristic of substance was unity; for another it was duality; for a third, infinite multiplicity. Whatever the basic philosophical question raised, much of this same diversity is found among the thinkers we have studied. Nor need it now be argued, after what has been abundantly evidenced in six preceding chapters, that some essential viewpoints of each man still have enduring vitality.

It is true, however, that the disagreements among the founders of modern philosophy were not so complete as the unwary reader might infer from a glance at the philosophical labels we have applied. But readers wishing adequate indication of the many and significant ways in which these seventeenth-century thinkers were agreed must be referred to competent

histories of modern philosophy. And in the examination of even the best of such works, the reader must remember that stress upon the differences between philosophers tends to obscure their agreements. Philosophers commonly reserve their sharpest attacks for their nearest neighbors and are themselves to blame for misleading the historians. In turn the historians, quite unintentionally, lead the casual reader to believe that the history of philosophy is a universe of intellectual chaos in which only disagreements are prized.

While we cannot take up the philosophical positions which these men held in common, a brief tracing of agreements in their religious attitudes and commitments may profitably occupy us for a further moment. We shall observe that they all recognize some intellectual bonds between their primary philosophical views and their religious positions and that none of them were genuine advocates of the doctrine of a double truth. All of them were the objects of attack from theologians, and all of them in turn insisted that the reason has rights in religion. And while it would be fantastic to maintain that the philosophy of each one culminated in his religious ideas, they were alike in that some phase of the thinking of each did culminate in a view of Christ.

The charge is often made that philosophers merely accept a religious faith which has no genuine roots in their own philosophy; that their philosophy really has no place for their religion. Against Descartes and Hobbes in particular this charge has been so persistently made and so ably argued that it cannot be brushed aside as merely the common accusation of the general atheism of philosophers.

In the second chapter of this volume we have tried to show that the religious interest of Descartes was not feigned; that

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his tongue was not in his cheek as he talked of revelation; that his philosophy did allow a place for his religion; and that it requires no excess of imaginative effort to discover a rational tie between his thinking and his praying, between his science and his worship. At bottom it serves to justify Descartes to recognize that it is rational to remember that reason is not co-extensive with life or with wisdom. And Descartes did wisely remember that he could not suspend his living while he finished his thinking. He remembered as a philosopher what he knew as a man: that living well could not be accomplished by any false universalizing of the sway of reason or by conferring on it dictatorial powers outside its own domain. His worship was not reduced to that poor and sterile thinness of a faith *derived from his thinking alone. And I have tried to show* that his thinking did seem to him to justify his continuing to be what he had been made by that totality of forces through which he thought God works—a devout Christian of Catholic France.

This argument to which reference has just been made is admittedly an unpopular view. But certainly my judgment on the question has not been controlled by any motive of mere dissent. If consideration of the revisionist view already developed has not persuaded the reader to surrender the orthodoxy of the historians, further insistence on my part would degenerate into special pleading which would offend the thoughtful reader. I believe, however, that it would be generally recognized that pleading the case for the genuineness of Descartes's religious sincerity was undertaking the hardest case and that making the same defense for any of the others is an easier task. Then, just for what it is worth it must be stated that my own hours with the founders of modern philosophy—hours as

intimate and personal as they may now be—leave this clear impression on my mind: to each one of these great thinkers his own religious position seemed rationally taken and even seemed intelligibly related to his own system of thought.

In another respect the founders of modern philosophy were alike. Each was sharply attacked by religious authorities, and each took his turn in waging at least partial warfare against the contemporary ecclesiastical claims. Even those who went farthest toward admitting that religious truth is independent of reason did not actually become adherents of the doctrine of a double truth. One may here review Pascal's fight against doctrines he thought false and his proposed appeal from Rome to Heaven. One should recall how Leibniz, even when he was in the mood to grant the greatest concessions toward Rome, reserved the right of private judgment; or Locke's rejection of prevailing theological subtleties; or Hobbes's stout fight against ecclesiastical claims; or Spinoza's incisive exposure of discrepancies in Scripture. And although Descartes claimed no authority in revealed matters, holding to a kind of autonomy of the divine, he never weakly surrendered to theologians the right to determine all boundary questions between religion and science. He emphatically repudiated the intellectual despotism which theology had exercised over every quest of truth. He proclaimed that every dependence upon the opinions of others is, for the philosopher, a false step, a departure from thought's true goal. He insisted that knowledge of the existence of God is not dependent on revelation, and at numerous other points he attacked and undermined pet ideas of popular theologies.

The fact is that all these philosophers refused to surrender the rights of reason in religion. They did not find the incisive use of reason inconsistent with their religious positions. They

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all recognized the need of bold and determined use of reason in testing and trying what was proposed as revelation, seeing that determination of truth in such matters could not be safely left to theologians.

We may note as a third point of agreement that in some ultimate sense each of these great thinkers professed faith in Christ. But it is perhaps impossible to press much beyond this somewhat bare agreement. The attempt to combine their views of Christ and arrive at what we might apologetically call "the Philosopher's Christ," would give us a figure such as history never knew; a composite alien to the Gospels and lacking in the religious values of the more individual portraits which each in turn held dear.

As one who has been trying to be faithful to historic facts, the author of this volume sees no way of denying the right of Christian apologetics to stress the point just made. It even lends itself, admittedly, to homiletical use. For efforts of the ablest minds of a past century remind us that the continued influence of Jesus in the world does not depend upon the acceptance of some one opinion about him. While there is an understandable sense in which he is the same yesterday, today, and forever, it is historically true that altered concepts of Jesus Christ follow from changes in social structure, in intellectual fashion, and in economic organization. There is no Christology adequate to portray him. There is no age which exhausts his meaning. There is no class which controls his influence. There is no institution which monopolizes his power. There is no portrait of the Lord Jesus which is final. He can be Lord and Savior for men of divergent philosophies. Representatives of philosophy's major viewpoints may still join in thinking that each new insight gained by men will reveal in him a more uplifting tragedy

and a sublimer love. That is some foundation for a Christian's faith that a portrait of Jesus will adorn future humanity's inmost shrine.

#### 4. FALSE QUESTS OF A COMMON FAITH

The title given this section may lead some readers to expect that here, at last, the author is obligated to give the religious views of the great philosophers that analytic, comparative, and combining treatment which could not be given their philosophies. Knowing the title of John Dewey's treatment of religion, but misunderstanding its meaning, they will expect something quite other than presentation of that modest and vital naturalistic religious faith which Dewey thinks has replaced in many lives the older orthodoxy which has become untenable. What the phrase *A Common Faith* implies for such people is that which the various forms of some faith have in common. They will, therefore, feel cheated at being told that this is an almost wholly fallacious way of arriving at a common faith. Analyzing and comparing the views of Christianity held by these philosophers with the purpose of extracting facts upon which they all agreed would produce some such unimportant generality as that Christianity was the religion of these six great thinkers. It would be but repetition of the almost futile study of religion by trying to find the greatest common denominator of the different religions. Sifting and comparing the living religions, eliminating their merely individual characteristics, reorganizing the beliefs, practices, motives, and feelings common to them all—such study commends itself to some minds. But the apparently inevitable result is a least common denominator, something so low as to be almost negligible in worth, in power, or in meaning. Certainly by "*a common*

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*faith*" Dewey meant nothing so insignificant as that. In fact he may be taken as a pre-eminent leader in the present movement toward making philosophy once more emphatically relevant to life; a leader, likewise, in the revolt against the exaggerated and barren intellectualism of which this "common denominator" study of religion is a vicious instance. There is ample justification for becoming even passionately interested in microscopic hair-splitting in some efforts of the mind. But even brilliant analytical probings after an essence of faith can give us only an intellectual residuum from which luster and life have fled. A least common denominator of faith becomes no pillar of cloud by day or of fire by night. Intellectual abstractions have no such power.

If philosophers, in their "pride of reason," have erred too often in following this vicious method, ordinary Christians have mostly sinned in being too generously receptive to everything for which supposedly good authority could be claimed. Such faith is hardly distinguishable from promiscuous credulity. It, too, lacks the drive, the sanity, the feeling of genuine and vital faith. Imagine the outlines of a common faith if it were to be attained by accepting everything which seemed true and vital to any one of these philosophers!

The common tendency of religious believers to relax their thinking in favor of unemphatic composites may be exemplified by considering the way in which many Christians take the Scriptures. We may profitably examine this common procedure at three important points.

Let us take, in the first place, the Gospel narratives of the relation of Jesus to John the Baptist. Each gospel credits John with the unique mission of preparing the way for the greater one to follow him, and each attributes to him a fulfillment of

that mission. Whichever gospel we examine, if it is studied appreciatively from its own particular viewpoint, we find a fairly high order of loyalty to that viewpoint. We might say that it possesses something like psychological integrity. But when we attempt, misled by a false reverence, to regard as authentic history each New Testament item bearing on this matter and try to weave together a single story which conserves them all, the resulting narrative becomes permeated with incredibility, for anyone who retains normal intelligence while reading the Scriptures. Instead of the psychological integrity of the individual gospels, the ambitious composite is a psychological monstrosity. It can seem relevant to normal minds only on the assumption that reason and religion belong to disconnected realms.

For a second example of value lost through indiscriminating unification, let us turn to the Gospel narratives of what Jesus said while being crucified. Let us note how the common reverential desire to combine all the materials in one grasp leads to a loss of power and to a blurring of comprehension.

The earliest gospel gives but one saying as uttered by Jesus from the cross, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" And the only other gospel which gives that word, gives it as the only word. That cry from the cross, as given in the setting of these gospels, has an emotional power and a solemn force which it cannot awaken when surrounded with six other reputed sayings culled from other gospels.

Perhaps only detailed examination of an individual narrative can make this point convincingly. We notice in Mark's narrative, for example, that nothing is inserted which weakens that solitary utterance presented as coming from Christ. There is no mention of any power remaining with him to promise paradise to an



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adoring malefactor. There is no suggestion of an action-pattern agreed on before the beginning of time which enabled him to announce precisely when his prearranged act is finished. He has no consolation from sympathetic friends. When they failed him in Gethsemane's agonizing hours, he was not alone; but now even God's consoling presence forsook him. Estrangement from God became deep and complete. From the lips of him to whom the invisible had been clearly seen, from him to whom the eternal was nearer than breathing, was forced this world's saddest cry.

Subsequently thousands have died from torture cruel as the crown of thorns and suffered pain equal to that which came from nails driven through his hands and feet. But none have undergone the anguish which lay behind this solitary saying from the cross. To have suffered as he suffered in that darkness, one must once have had his bread from heaven, one must have sensed capacity to cast out devils and to order life-destroying demons to depart. Like a great artist, the gospel author puts in no touches to detract from the tragic realism of that last recorded word of Christ. It is true that another cry is mentioned, but the author leaves it simply as a heart-breaking cry. After that one clear saying which was recorded, there was no verbal medium for further meaning. It was time for silence, noon-day darkness, and the beginning of a chain of confession across the ages, "Truly this man was the Son of God."

That ending was practically intolerable for Christian faith, and it is easily understandable that other reputed sayings were prized. But as it stands the individual gospel attains emotional effects almost unmatched in literature. When the intolerable completeness of its tragic sorrow is toned down by being bound up and woven in with half a dozen other words, the total

pattern is more than our minds can grasp. Instead of the intense appreciation of one great emphasis, we feel ourselves almost completely submerged in supernatural psychology.

Our final illustration reaches to even deeper levels of Christian faith. There are three propositions presupposed in the argument to which we turn. These propositions are simply stated, not defended, but the evidence in their favor is conclusive. First, it has always been a heresy to deny that Jesus Christ was a man. Second, no important section of the Christian church has ever meant to say that Jesus Christ was the only son of God. Third, for every vital section of the Christian church Christ sustained a unique relationship to God, and it is this which makes him an object of Christian faith.

As we recite a common Christian creed and confess belief in God and "Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord," we may fail to notice that capital letter "S." Express words of Jesus, Paul, and John so often call others sons or children of God as to make it almost impossible that any later statement of Christ as God's only son could be seriously meant.<sup>4</sup> Also, the Greek and Latin words which lie behind the English far more properly mean "unique" than "only." That uniqueness of Christ's relationship to God was stated for the New Testament period in the assertion that Jesus was "the only begotten Son of God." It becomes, then, profoundly important to ask when and how Jesus was begotten Son of God. The fact is that the New Testament gives several intelligible answers to this question—each of which at one time sustained a vital faith in Christ. But however great the reverence with which they are lumped together, the resulting narrative becomes incredible.

The New Testament contains convincing evidence that a helpful, saving faith in Christ was realized on the basis of

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radically different conceptions of when and how Christ was begotten Son of God. The details have long been known to the scholars, but their very existence has often been concealed from common Christians, the church having tried to fasten on subsequent generations the idealized picture of an early age of unified faith.

The first New Testament variety of vital Christology can best be found in Paul's speech recorded in Acts 13:16-33. The great promise of the Second Psalm is there recalled: how on a day to come God would declare to some one, "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten Thee." Paul declares that the day did come; that on a world-remaking day God's ancient promise was fulfilled; that the day of that stupendous fulfillment when Jesus entered into his unique relationship to God was the day when he was raised from the dead.

It would be folly to begin today to prove that this view attributed to Paul was right. But it is of vast importance, in an age again urgently striving for a unified faith, to remember this evidence that the most abundant laborer in the early church found it possible to ground his faith on such a view. One may likewise learn of the great Christians of early times who thought that Christ was begotten Son of God in his baptism; of others who thought it was in his being born of a virgin; or one may find the evidence that the claims made by other religions for their "gods many" and "lords many" influenced Christians in their thought of Christ, all these earlier "lower" views coming at last to seem unsatisfactory when standing alone; so that we get, finally, another conception which maintains that Jesus never entered into that unique relationship to God; that there never was a day when He was begotten Son of God, himself having been very God of very God from all eternity.

It is not my purpose to belittle any one of these views or to impugn the validity of the faith of Christians who now accept them. It is rather to make it a matter of common knowledge that there is no one interpretation of Jesus which has a monopoly on saving and inspiring value; that much of the variety found in later ages of the Christian faith sprang from the earliest records of him who because of what he was and what he did, has become almost inseparably linked with God in our thoughts. Secondly, if the interests of the mind are to be served, it must be recognized that a pious lumping together of different views can fulfill no purpose except to conserve a superstitious bibliolatry or to banish the intellect from its rights in religion.

If Christianity has, as Santayana put it, ransacked the treasures of three great civilizations, it has also borrowed much that is wood, hay, and stubble. Like every other great religion with a varied history, Christianity preserves and carries such an array of assorted materials that no wise philosopher can accept and believe all that is offered as Christian. As in other days, so today there are forced options for the thinker. And each philosopher is, of course, judged by his judgments, as is the case with other men. And so long as philosophy is free, it is almost certain that in winning one philosopher's sympathy any proposed common faith will alienate another philosopher's support.

## 5. FACT, PHILOSOPHY, AND FAITH

Each preceding chapter has given added evidence that the intellectual defense of Christianity does not necessitate the acceptance of some particular philosophy as the only one consonant with faith in Christ and the coming Kingdom. If such a statement looks like disloyalty to philosophy, it is at least honest history.

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The predominance of one philosophy is, indeed, a proper enough goal of social effort if society is itself unified; and a philosophy would rightly be discredited if its adherents were not concerned to have it grow in favor. But in spite of the frequency with which some one philosophy has posed as sole defendant of religion, there is no one philosophical system which must triumph in order for Christian faith to live. Whether chance or order goes up or goes down in contemporary favor and however known cosmic styles may wax or wane, a vigorous and vital Christianity need not be without philosophical support.

Philosophies will doubtless run through new cycles of change, influenced by growth of knowledge and by loss of knowledge, as well as by other factors such as were briefly stated in the first chapter. Of course no self-respecting Christian thinker would even dream of accepting ignorance and mystery as sufficient basis for faith. But it does seem clear that knowledge, also, is not in itself adequate material from which to constitute religion. In any scanning of the future in store for man it seems fairly certain that there will be enough both of knowledge and of mystery for the survival of faith. The amassing of new facts does not lessen the contact of man with the unknown. The trained mind of a competent thinker, discerning the vaster order which the effort of his colleagues has revealed, confronts more and deeper mysteries than early man could ever feel. The discovery of intricate order within minute objects does not diminish the mysteriousness of the world or the awe which springs from mystery. Nor does the outward reach of mind through the vastnesses of space banish our sense of the unknown. A development in scientific method may advance knowledge and at the same time raise new questions. Each triumph for science may expose mysteries hitherto undreamed.

It is of questionable wisdom to claim any man for Chris-

tianity over his own objections. The case for Christianity does not require that every thinker who gains intellectual eminence should be given a verbal baptism for apologetics' sake. But without again raising a premature chorus of welcome to the ranks of the theists, we do welcome Dewey's weighed conclusion that *God* is the best name available for a reality which science can discover and to some extent describe. He has presented convincing reasons for moving beyond humanism and has justified "piety toward the actual" by methods of investigation not borrowed from religious tradition. The extent of his success in finding a religious quality of life in the quest of knowledge and in the use of knowledge makes us lament the note of bitterness which mars their work when some Christian thinkers attack his views. Certainly he has not been guilty of that charge which Leibniz made against Descartes; of deceiving the world by playing adroitly with agreeable words.

In considering whether Dewey's position in *A Common Faith* is Christian, one needs to consider much more than patterns of words. Jesus's own proposed basis for judging fidelity to him did not reduce it to saying, "Lord, Lord." The use of his standards in classifying men might leave many of our contemporaries wonderingly saying, "Lord, when saw we thee . . . ?" True understanding of him compels perpetual rejection of all proposals to reduce a man's relationship to God to the use or the rejection of some approved pattern of words. Each of the founders of modern philosophy can be quoted in emphatic protest against the reduction of the Christian religion to a proper kind of talk. As Leibniz put it in a passage deserving frequent repetition, it is

Well for men to talk of the love of God; but I see by the effects that few men truly have it, even those who are plunged deepest into mysticism. The touchstone of the love of God is that Saint John has

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given, and one who has a veritable ardor for the general good . . . is not far from the love of God.

When men are measured by such a test our great American instrumentalist may be surprised how high he ranks among the Christian thinkers.

But whatever the result of continuing discussion as to whether any one philosopher is in fact among the Christians, the future prospects for religion rest on broader grounds of human nature. And grateful as we may be for Dewey's statement of the important truths which may be reached by tested methods of science, many of us will continue to feel a more profound indebtedness to him for encouragement toward a bolder use of speculative imagination. There is much in the history this book has traced which affords evidence for thinking that men of the future will not restrict their interests to scientific knowing. Spinoza may not have expressed the final truth when he said that the human mind is part of an infinite understanding, but philosophers of the most diverse types conspire to prove that there is something unquenchable within us, pushing us beyond the farthest citadel of established fact and moving us, without discarding reason, to walk by faith.

The founders of modern philosophy would not encourage men to accept invitations down the dark alleys where a blind faith leads. None of them would advise us really to reject a reasoning reason. But however diverse the systems of thought they built, these great thinkers agree with plain Christians that men do well to walk also by faith. Indeed, it is not at all a philosopher's paradox, but the plain fact of open-eyed experience, that without faith men cannot embody the life of reason.

# Notes

## CHAPTER I: THE ETERNAL NEEDS THE HISTORIC

1. I Cor. 1: 26.
2. From Mahaffy, *Descartes*, Edinburgh and London, 1880, p. 61.
3. *Cambridge Modern History*, Cambridge University Press, V, 77. Quotations by permission of The Macmillan Company, the United States publishers.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 73.
5. Chevalier, *Descartes*, Paris, 1921, p. 61.
6. Letter to Balzac. See note 29 to ch. ii.

## CHAPTER II: DESCARTES

THE STANDARD EDITION of the *Œuvres*, edited by Adam and Tannery, was unfortunately not available to me until after my manuscript had been completed, so that not all my references are to this edition. I have ventured to translate some passages from the correspondence, and in a few cases I have preferred to translate anew some familiar passages from the *Discourse* and from the *Meditations*, usually from the text as quoted by Gouhier. Commonly, however, I have used the Veitch translation, as given in the Open Court edition.

1. *Discourse on Method* (Hereafter referred to as *Method*), pp. 30-31.
2. Lévy-Bruhl, *Essay on Descartes*, Open Court ed., Preface, p. xx.
3. Renouvier, *Manuel de philosophie moderne*, p. 182; cited from Gouhier, *op. cit.*, p. 8.
4. Gouhier, *La Pensée religieuse des Descartes*, Paris (6, Place de la Sorbonne), J. Vrin, 1924, p. 8.
5. *Method*, p. 74.
6. Cited from Keeling, *Descartes*, London, 1934, p. 21. Quoted by permission of the Oxford University Press.
7. *Method*, p. 25.
8. *Principles of Philosophy*, Open Court ed., pp. 108-9.
9. Boutroux in *Cambridge Modern History*, IV, 790.
10. Letter 141, to P. Vatie, 22 Fev., 1638. I am indebted to my daughter Jane Bradshaw for the translation.



11. *Method*, pp. 14-15. Cf. K. Fischer, *Descartes and His School*, p. 192. Quoted by permission of Chas. Scribner's Sons.
12. Cited from Fischer, *op. cit.*, p. 166.
13. *Recherche de la vérité*, p. 338.
14. *Method*, p. 76.
15. *Principles*, Letter, p. 109.
16. *Method*, p. 29.
17. *Meditations*, end III.
18. *Principles*, Letter, p. 114.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 109.
20. *Method*, p. 29.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 15.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 71.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 73.
24. See Fischer, *op. cit.*, p. 167.
25. *Method*, p. 79, and letter to Mersenne, April, 1634.
26. *Method*, end.
27. Gilson, quoted from Keeling, *op. cit.*, p. 28.
28. Höffding, *History of Modern Philosophy*, I, 215. Quoted by permission of The Macmillan Company.
29. Fischer, *op. cit.*, p. 278.
30. Quoted from a translation in Fischer, *op. cit.*, p. 210.
31. *Method*, p. 7.
32. Mahaffy, *Descartes*, p. 6.
33. Quoted from Fischer, *op. cit.*, p. 267.
34. *Œuvres* II; 361-62, cited from Gouhier, *op. cit.*, p. 311.
35. *On World*, cited from Eaton; *Selections from Descartes*, New York, 1927. Quoted by permission Chas. Scribner's Sons.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 17.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 27.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 22.
39. Fischer, *op. cit.*, p. 341.
40. *Method*, pp. 36-37.
41. *Meditations*, IV, 99.
42. Cited from Eaton, *op. cit.*, Introduction, xxxii.
43. *Method*, p. 41.
44. Letter 29, to Mersenne, May 6, 1630.
45. *Method*, p. 41.
46. *Meditations*, IV, 63, 81.
47. *Cambridge Modern History*, V, 782.
48. *Principles*, Appendix, p. 220.
49. *Meditations*, IV, 79.
50. *History of Modern Philosophy*, I, 223.
51. *On World*, ch. vi, quoted from Eaton, *op. cit.*, p. 321.
52. *Ibid.*, ch. vii, p. 323.
53. *Method*, pp. 44-45.
54. *Meditations*, VI, from Fischer, *op. cit.*, p. 475.
55. Levy-Bruhl, *op. cit.*, p. 28.
56. Fischer, *op. cit.*, p. 364.
57. *Method*, p. 27.
58. *Passions*, CXLVI, quoted from Eaton, *op. cit.*, p. 393.
59. *Method*, p. 66.
60. *Ibid.*, p. 69.
61. Letter, January, 1630.
62. *Œuvres*, III, 544, cited from Gouhier. See Rand's Introduction to Boethius, pp. X-XI, in "Loeb Classical Library," for an important discussion, called to my attention by Dr. Levinson.
63. *Ibid.*, IX, 230, from Gouhier, p. 230.
64. *Ibid.*, IX, 232, from Gouhier, p. 241.
65. *Principles*, p. 174.
66. *Œuvres*, IX, 230.
67. Letter, May 10, 1632, to Mersenne.
68. Levy-Bruhl, *op. cit.*, p. 13.
69. *Ibid.*, p. 57.

70. Letter, May 27, 1630.
71. Keeling, *op. cit.*, p. 18.
72. Letter 58, I, 242, and Letter 141 (22 Feb. 1638) p. 137.
73. To Mersenne, August 23, 1638.
74. Cited by Gouhier, p. 187.
75. *Œuvres*, V, 176, from Gouhier, p. 207.
76. Gouhier, *op. cit.*, p. 220.
77. Chevalier, *Descartes*, Paris, 1921, p. 45.
78. Milhaud, quoted by Gouhier, *op. cit.*, p. 53.
79. Letter to Clerselier, *Œuvres*, IX, 208, translated from Gouhier, *op. cit.*, p. 207.
80. Gouhier, *op. cit.*, p. 231.
81. Letter, Feb. 1, 1647.
82. Evidence in Gouhier, *op. cit.*, p. 238.
83. *Œuvres*, XII, 345, as cited by Gouhier.
84. Gouhier, *op. cit.*, p. 21.
85. Letter, October, 1631.  
Cf. Gouhier, *op. cit.*, p. 18.
87. Maritain, *Descartes*, Paris, 1931, p. 47.
88. Cited by Gouhier, *op. cit.*, pp. 187-88.
89. Chevalier, *op. cit.*, p. 26n.
90. Gouhier, *op. cit.*, p. 87.
91. *Ibid.*, p. 286.
92. *Ibid.*
93. *Correspondence*, ed. by Adam and Milhaud, I, 346.
94. Quoted from Gouhier, *op. cit.*, p. 146.
95. Chevalier, *op. cit.*, p. 25.
96. *Method*, near end Part I.
97. Quoted from Gouhier, *op. cit.*, p. 313.
98. Letter, August 15, 1630.
99. Letter, May 6, 1630.
100. To Mersenne, translated from Gouhier, *op. cit.*, p. 308.
101. *Œuvres*, III, 695.

## CHAPTER III: HOBBS

UNLESS otherwise indicated, references are to the Molesworth edition of the *Works* of Hobbes. The Roman numeral indicates the number of the volume, and the following number is that of the page. Where a Roman numeral is used also for the page number, it is to a page in the Preface or Introduction, and appears so numbered in the *Works*.

1. *Cambridge Modern History*, VI, 811.
2. Höffding, *History of Modern Philosophy*, I, 264.
3. III, 359.
4. II, 236.
5. III, 55.
6. III, 362.
7. III, 361.
8. III, 273.
9. III, 589.
10. I Kings, ch. xiii, quoted in III, 362.
11. II, 236-37.
12. III, 366.
13. III, 522.
14. II, 237, quoting Deut., 18: 21, 22.
15. III, 64.
16. III, 589.
17. *Church and State in the Modern World*, New York and London, 1937, p. 12.
18. VI, 249.
19. See *International Conciliation*, 1937, p. 475.

20. III, 85-86.  
 21. II, 222.  
 22. III, 312.  
 23. II, 204.  
 24. IV, 329.  
 25. III, 688.  
 26. IV, 252.  
 27. III, 462.  
 28. II, 317.  
 29. V, 444-45.  
 30. III, 437.  
 31. VI, 183.  
 32. VI, 196.  
 33. VI, 18.  
 34. VII, 167.  
 35. VI, 298.  
 36. II, 161, quoted from Sallust.  
 37. VI, 169.  
 38. VI, 189.  
 39. III, 706.  
 40. VI, 189.  
 41. VI, 104.  
 42. VI, 189.  
 43. VI, 182.  
 44. VI, 184.  
 45. III, 550.  
 46. II, 12.  
 47. III, 584.  
 48. II, 151.  
 49. II, 151.  
 50. II, 316.  
 51. III, 703.  
 52. II, 13.  
 53. IV, 414.  
 54. II, XIV.  
 55. II, XXI.  
 56. End of *Leviathan*.  
 57. IV, 340.  
 58. VI, 282.  
 59. VI, 373.  
 60. VI, 282.  
 61. VI, 190.  
 62. VI, 193.  
 63. VI, 193-96.  
 64. VI, 330, 431.  
 65. VI, 343.  
 66. VI, 243.  
 67. VII, VII.  
 68. VI, 343.  
 69. VI, 243.  
 70. III, 699.  
 71. III, 605.  
 72. Hocking, *Man and the State*,  
 New Haven, 1926, p. 143 and  
 note.  
 73. III, 337.  
 74. III, 334.  
 75. III, 333.  
 76. IV, 367.  
 77. IV, 433.  
 78. II, 268.  
 79. II, 258.  
 80. II, 257.  
 81. II, 261.  
 82. II, 314.  
 83. III, 496.  
 84. III, 590, 591-95.  
 85. III, 519.  
 86. II, 314.  
 87. III, 584.  
 88. III, 585.

## CHAPTER IV: LOCKE

NO ONE standard edition of the work of Locke was available to me, and it has been necessary to give references to several different editions. References to *Works* are to the Bohn edition of the Philosophical Works of Locke. For the convenience of the reader I have usually given the book, chapter, and section in referring to the *Essay*, rather than page of a given edition.

1. *Conduct of the Understanding*, sec. 4.
2. *Ibid.*, sec. 1.
3. *Essay*, Bk. II, ch. ii, sec. 2.
4. *Two Treatises of Government*, p. 183. I have been unable to secure the place and date of the edition used.
5. *Third Letter on Toleration*, p. 370. The citations from the letters on toleration are from *Works*, 5th ed., London, 1751. Hereafter these letters will be abbreviated, as I *Tol.*, II *Tol.*
6. *Second Vindication, Works*, p. 627.
7. *Conduct of the Understanding*, sec. 23.
8. I *Tol.*, p. 258.
9. III *Tol.*, p. 403.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 368.
11. *Conduct of the Understanding*, sec. 3.
12. I *Tol.*, p. 253.
13. II *Tol.*, p. 627.
14. Letter to Molyneux, Jan. 19, 1693.
15. *Works*, I, 121.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 38.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 117.
18. Quoted by Höffding, *History of Modern Philosophy*, I, 378.
19. *Works*, I, 124.
20. III *Tol.*, p. 627.
21. *Works*, edition of 1751, p. 591.
22. Quoted from Lamprecht's *Selections from Locke*, New York, 1927; by permission of Chas. Scribner's Sons. Dr. Levinson suggests that the ultimate source is Pope's *Dunciad*, Bk. IV, l. 188.
23. Fox Bourne, *Life of Locke*, II, 35.
24. *Two Treatises of Government*, p. 105.
25. *Cambridge Modern History*, VI, 814.
26. *Two Treatises of Government*, sec. 1.
27. Source lost.
28. *Two Treatises of Government*, p. 182.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 193.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 205.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 211.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 177.
33. III *Tol.*, p. 358.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 365.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 358.
36. I *Tol.*, p. 260.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 257.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 244.
39. II *Tol.*, pp. 278-79.
40. I *Tol.*, p. 242.
41. *Ibid.*, p. 241.
42. *Ibid.*, p. 246.
43. *Ibid.*, p. 259.
44. *Ibid.*, p. 244.
45. III *Tol.*, p. 312.
46. I *Tol.*, p. 259.
47. This was a kind of diary and notebook he kept.
48. *Preface to Mr. Bold*.
49. *Works*, I, 47.
50. II *Tol.*, p. 267.
51. *Preface, A Commonplace Book*.
52. *Essay*, Bk. IV, ch. xiii, sec. 4.
53. III *Tol.*, p. 318.
54. *Ibid.*, p. 414.
55. *Works*, I, 28.
56. *Reasonableness of Christianity*, edition of 1751, p. 579.
57. *Works*, I, 71.
58. *Essay*, Bk. IV, ch. xviii, sec. 3.
59. *Ibid.*, sec. 11.
60. *Ibid.*, Bk. IV, ch. xix, sec. 4.
61. *Ibid.*, sec. 5.

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|---|--------------------------------|
| 62. <i>Ibid.</i> , sec. 9.  | 66. <i>Ibid.</i> , p. 559.     |
| 63. <i>Ibid.</i> , sec. 11.   | 67. <i>Ibid.</i> , p. 570.     |
| 64. <i>Ibid.</i> , sec. 14.   | 68. <i>Ibid.</i> , p. 571.     |
| 65. <i>Reasonableness of Christianity</i> ,<br>ed. of 1751, p. 563. | 69. <i>Ibid.</i> , p. 567.     |
|   | 70. <i>Ibid.</i> , pp. 586-87. |

## CHAPTER V: PASCAL

MY TRANSLATIONS of the *Thoughts* are commonly taken from the old edition of 1849, published by Gould, Kendall and Company. The materials published as Pascal's *Thoughts* are fragments never arranged by him, and published in a great variety of orders by different editors. I have given here the numbering of the fragments adopted in the standard edition of the *Œuvres*, Vols. XII-XIV, wherever possible, but have sometimes failed to locate the fragment in this edition, and in such cases have given references to pages of the Gould-Kendall edition, as in note 21, for example.

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| 1. See Weber and Perry, <i>History of Philosophy</i> , for example.   | 16. <i>Pen.</i> , 210, quoted from Chevalier, <i>op. cit.</i>                      |
| 2. Chevalier, <i>Pascal</i> , London, 1930, p. 13. Quotations from this book are by permission of Sheed and Ward.   | 17. <i>Pen.</i> , 148.   |
| 3. Quoted from Höffding, <i>History of Modern Philosophy</i> , I, 253.  | 18. <i>Pen.</i> , 82.  |
| 4. Quoted from Chevalier, <i>op. cit.</i> , ch. i.  | 19. See Chevalier, <i>op. cit.</i> , p. 85.  |
| 5. <i>Pensées</i> , 278. Hereafter, <i>Pen.</i>   | 20. <i>Pen.</i> , 144.   |
| 6. Chevalier, <i>op. cit.</i> , p. 267.   | 21. <i>Thoughts</i> , Bk. I, ch. ii.   |
| 7. <i>Ibid.</i> , ch. i.  | 22. Bishop, <i>op. cit.</i> , p. 311.  |
| 8. Bishop, <i>Pascal: the Life of Genius</i> , New York, 1936, p. 289. Quotations from this book are by permission of the publishers, Reynal and Hitchcock. | 23. <i>Ibid.</i> , p. 78.  |
| 9. Rogers, <i>Reason and Faith</i> , Boston, 1853, p. 169.  | 24. For many of the facts given I am indebted to Bishop, <i>op. cit.</i> , p. 172. |
| 10. <i>Pen.</i> , 421.  | 25. <i>Pen.</i> , 280.   |
| 11. <i>Pen.</i> , 294.  | 26. Cited from Bishop, <i>op. cit.</i> , p. 182.                                   |
| 12. Quoted from Brunschvicg by Chevalier, <i>op. cit.</i>   | 27. Chevalier, <i>op. cit.</i> , p. 73.  |
| 13. Chevalier, <i>op. cit.</i> , pp. 12, 151.   | 28. <i>Ibid.</i> , p. 100.   |
| 14. <i>Pen.</i> , 168.  | 29. Bishop, <i>op. cit.</i> , p. 114.  |
| 15. <i>Pen.</i> , 146.  | 30. <i>Pen.</i> , 345.   |
|   | 31. <i>Pen.</i> , 347.   |
|   | 32. <i>Pen.</i> , 282.   |
|   | 33. <i>Thoughts</i> , p. 296.  |
|   | 34. <i>Pen.</i> , 229.   |
|   | 35. <i>Thoughts</i> , Bk. I, ch. 1, sec. 3, p. 80.                                 |
|   | 36. <i>Pen.</i> , 267.   |
|   | 37. <i>Œuvres</i> , XII, cxciv-v.  |

38. *Pen.*, 543.
39. *Thoughts*, Bk. II, ch. xv, sec. 2.
40. *Ibid.*
41. *Ibid.*, Bk. I, ch. i, sec. 3.
42. Chevalier, *op. cit.*, p. 256.
43. *Ibid.*, p. 43.
44. *Ibid.*, p. 24.
45. Bishop, *op. cit.*, p. 220.
46. *Ibid.*
47. *Thoughts*, Bk. II, ch. xix, sec. 78.
48. *Provincial Letters* 5. Edition published by Turner, Washington, 1831. Hereafter, P. L.
49. P. L. 12, p. 162.
50. P. L. 5.
51. P. L. 18, p. 295.
52. P. L. 4.
53. P. L. 14.
54. P. L. 12, p. 158.
55. P. L. 16, p. 240.
56. P. L. 14.
57. P. L. 5.
58. P. L. 16, p. 243.
59. P. L. 5.
60. P. L. 11, p. 144.
61. P. L. 7, near end of letter. Bishop's translation, *op. cit.*, p. 258.
62. *Œuvres*, X, 156, quoted from Chevalier, p. 286.
63. *Thoughts*, p. 257, with some transposition. *Pen.*, 793.
64. *Pen.*, 483, as quoted and condensed by Chevalier, *op. cit.*, p. 287.
65. *Thoughts*, p. 257. (*Pen.*, 786.)
66. *Thoughts*, Bk. II, ch. x, sec. 3, with omissions. (*Pen.*, 792.)
67. *Œuvres*, XII, 434, not 343 as Index wrongly says. *Pen.*, 553. I have depended most on Chevalier, but also on Bishop and Craig. The italics are mostly not in the text.
68. *Pen.*, 553.
69. *Pen.*, 737.

## CHAPTER VI: SPINOZA

QUOTATIONS are from the Elwes translation, Bohn Library edition.

1. See Browne, *Blessed Spinoza*, New York, 1932. Quoted by permission of the Macmillan Company.
2. Cf. Höffding, *History of Modern Philosophy*, I, 292.
3. Borrowed from Wolfson, *Spinoza; Life of Reason*, New York, 1932. Quoted by permission of the College Entrance Book Company.
4. Text may be found in Wolfson, *op. cit.*, and in Durant, *Story of Philosophy*.
5. *A Theologico-Political Treatise*, ch. vii (hereafter T. P. T.)
6. Cf. Durant, *op. cit.*, chapter on Spinoza.
7. *Ethics*, V, prop. 39.
8. *Ethics*, IV, prop. 35, cor. ii, note.
9. *Ibid.*, prop. 45, cor. ii, note.
10. See the books mentioned in notes 1, 3, 6.
11. Epistle 49, as numbered in the Bohn edition of the *Works*.
12. T. P. T., end ch. v.
13. *Ethics*, V, prop. 38n.
14. *Ethics*, IV, prop. 46n.
15. *Ethics*, IV, prop. 73n.

16. Variation of a point made by Durant, *op. cit.*
17. Melamed (*Spinoza and Buddha*, Chicago, 1933, p. 9) says that Spinoza does not desire welfare. It seems to me that the statement can be true only if he uses the word "welfare" in some very narrow sense.
18. T. P. T., ch. vii.
19. *Ethics*, V, prop. 41, proof.
20. *Ethics*, IV, prop. 52n.
21. *Ethics*, IV, Appendix, sec. 4.
22. *Works*, Vol. II, pp. 3-5.
23. *Ethics*, II, prop. 10, cor., note.
24. See definitions, Bk. I, and all.
25. *Ethics*, I, prop. 32, cor., note.
26. *Ibid.*, prop. 15n.
27. *Ibid.*, definition 6.
28. Wolfson, *Philosophy of Spinoza*, Cambridge, 1934.
29. See Epistles 21 and 15.
30. *Ethics*, I, Appendix.
31. Epistle 15.
32. Epistle 60.
33. *Ethics*, II, prop. 3n.
34. *Ibid.*, IV, Preface.
35. *Ibid.*, II, prop. 3n.
36. Epistle 32.
37. *Ethics*, I, p10p. 33.
38. *Ibid.*, note 2.
39. See Epistle 33, Blyenberg to Spinoza.
40. Epistle 34.
41. T. P. T., Preface.
42. *Ibid.*, p. 9.
43. Epistle 25.
44. Epistle 34.
45. T. P. T., ch. xiv.
46. *Ibid.*
47. *Ibid.*, ch. xii.
48. *Ibid.*, ch. v.
49. *Ibid.*, ch. ii.
50. *Ibid.*
51. *Ibid.*, ch. xiii.
52. *Ibid.*, ch. xiv.
53. *Ibid.*, ch. i.
54. Epistle 74.
55. Epistle 31.
56. See Epistle 74, to Albert Burgh.
57. *Scepticism and Animal Faith*, New York, 1923, p. viii.
58. T. P. T., Preface.

## CHAPTER VII: LEIBNIZ

1. Merz, *European Thought in the Nineteenth Century*, 4th ed., III, 48. Quoted by permission of the University of Chicago Press.
2. Russell, *System of Theology*, p. 73.
3. Duncan, *Philosophical Works of Leibniz*, ed. 1890, p. 131 (Cited hereafter as Duncan).
4. Duncan, pp. 283-84.
5. *Ibid.*
6. Merz, *op. cit.*, III, 343.
7. *On Reform of Metaphysics*, X; Duncan, p. 68.
8. *Remarks on Toland's . . .*, cited from *Pensées de Leibniz*, Paris, An XI, 1803, I, 239.
9. Dewey, *New Essays*, Chicago, 1888, p. 25.
10. Merz, *op. cit.*, IV, 528; III, 28, and Dewey, *op. cit.*, p. 128.
11. Merz, *op. cit.*, IV, 204.
12. *Ibid.*, III, 329; and Brock, *Contemporary German Philosophy*, pp. 5-6.
13. See *Mysticism and Logic*, pp. 180 ff.
14. See, e. g., treatment of perspectives in *Monadology*, sec. 57, and Russell's *Analysis of Mind*.
15. Dewey, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

16. Letter of 1696 to G. Wagner.
17. Höffding, *History of Modern Philosophy*, I, 333.
18. Duncan, p. 111.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 108.
20. See Schirnhausen's letter to Spinoza, Höffding, *op. cit.*, I, 335.
21. Letter to Hobbes, 1670, cited by Latta, *Monadology*, p. 7.
22. Gerhardt, III, 205, from Latta, *op. cit.*, p. 13.
23. *Fifth Letter to Clarke*, in Duncan, p. 260.
24. *Fourth Letter to Clarke*, in Duncan, p. 247.
25. *Correspondence with Arnauld*, Open Court ed., p. 117.
26. Russell, *Philosophy of Leibniz*, Preface to 1st ed., p. xiv in 2d ed. Quoted by permission of George Allen & Unwin.
27. Open Court ed., p. 81.
28. Quoted by B. Russell, p. 72, from Gerhardt, II, 492.
29. Duncan, p. 125.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 183.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 47.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 107.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 2.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 8.
35. *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.
36. Jordan, *Leibniz and Re-Union*, p. 198.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 193.
38. Open Court ed., p. 73.
39. Jordan, *op. cit.*, p. 129, quoting Rommell, p. 291.
40. Jordan, p. 181, from Careil's ed., *Œuvres*, II, 207-8.
41. See Preface to 2d ed., especially p. vi, where he is, however, more clever than convincing.
42. Russell, *System of Theology*, pp. cxxix, cxxxiii.
43. Jordan quotes Leibniz as saying he had seen the credentials.
44. Open Court ed., p. 74.
45. *Œuvres*, I, 175, from Jordan, *op. cit.*, p. 140.
46. *System of Theology*, p. 145.
47. Jordan, *op. cit.*, p. 131, citing Rommell, II, 396.
48. Open Court ed., pp. 85-86.
49. Baruzzi, *Leibniz et l'organisation religieuse de la terre*, Paris, F. Alcan, 1907, p. 230.
50. Latta, *op. cit.*, p. 13n.
51. Baruzzi, *op. cit.*, p. 187.
52. *System of Theology*, p. 111n.
53. Baruzzi, *op. cit.*, pp. 225-228.
54. Letter of 1686, Open Court ed., p. 169.
55. Baruzzi, *op. cit.*, p. 224.
56. *System of Theology*, p. 58, and viii and lvixn.
57. Cited in Merkel, *Leibniz und die Chinesische Mission*, p. 130.
58. Careil, *Œuvres*, II, 307, quoted by Jordan, *op. cit.*, p. 172.
59. Quoted from Merkel, *op. cit.*, p. 130.
60. Preface; *Theodicee*, quoted by Merkel, *op. cit.*, pp. 135, 143.
61. *Pensées de Leibniz*, I, 222.
62. *New Essays*, p. 19.
63. Carr, *Leibniz*, 1929, pp. 153 ff.
64. Letter to Burnet, from *Pensées de Leibniz*, I, 219.
65. Klopp, IV, 456, quoted by Baruzzi, *op. cit.*, p. 245.
66. *Ibid.*, p. 147.
67. Langley's ed., *New Essays*, p. 650.
68. Baruzzi, *op. cit.*, p. 243.
69. Quoted by Baruzzi, *op. cit.*, p. 446, from *Œuvres*, VII, 34.
70. Baruzzi, *op. cit.*, p. 204.
71. *Ibid.*, p. 424.
72. Merkel, *op. cit.*, p. 129.



73. *Ibid.*, p. 148.
74. *Ibid.*, p. 40, from Baruzzi, *Textes ined.*, p. 140 f.
75. Merkel, *op. cit.*, p. 24.
76. Warneck; *History of Protestant Missions*, 3d Eng. ed., p. 42. Quoted by permission of the Fleming H. Revell Co.
77. Merkel, *op. cit.*, p. 128.
78. Letter to Grimaldi, in *Pensées de Leibniz*, II, 318-19.
79. Merkel, *op. cit.*, p. 128.
80. *Ibid.*, p. 59, from Klopp, *Die Werke*, VIII, 189.
81. *Ibid.*, p. 61.
82. Letter to Kochanski, No. 487 in Bodemann, p. 116, from Merkel, *op. cit.*, p. 52.
83. Letter to Bouvet, April 20, 1698.
84. *System of Theology*, p. 40.
85. Merkel, *op. cit.*, p. 30.
86. Quoted by Merkel, *op. cit.*, p. 128.
87. Merkel, *op. cit.*, p. 116.
88. Merkel, *op. cit.*, p. 125, quoting Feuerbach.
89. Letter to Ludorf, Dec. 12, 1689.
90. *Œuvres*, I, 17 f.
91. Quoted by Jordan, *op. cit.*, p. 64.
92. Merkel, *op. cit.*, p. 125.
93. Letter to Bouvet, 1703, from Merkel, *op. cit.*, p. 97.
94. Jordan, *op. cit.*, p. 139.
95. Rommell, I, 277; my translation. Text from Jordan, *op. cit.*, p. 128.
96. Open Court ed., p. 84.
97. *System of Theology*, p. 45.
98. Quoted from Jordan, *op. cit.*, p. 81.
99. *System of Theology*, p. 47.
100. Dewey, *op. cit.*, p. 19.
101. Jordan, *op. cit.*, pp. 36-37.
102. *Ibid.*, Preface, p. v.
103. *System of Theology*, p. 51.
104. *Ibid.*, quoted from Jordan, *op. cit.*, p. 81.
105. *Ibid.*, pp. 82-83.
106. *System of Theology*, pp. 49-50.
107. *Pensées de Leibniz*, II, 330.
108. Letter to Mme Scudéry, quoted from *Pensées*, II, 331.

#### CHAPTER VIII: A COMMON FAITH

1. See above, chap. i, sec. 4.
2. Quoted from Fischer, *Descartes and His School*, p. 176.
3. *Method*, near end of Part I.
4. Notice how Jesus, in addressing others in Matt., chaps. 5 and 6, refers to them as children of God, or as sons of God, and to God as "your Father," and teaches them to pray "Our Father." See also Galatians 3-4, especially 3:26 and 4:6, and John 1:12.

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